

PlayStation *plus*

**EXCLUSIVE NEWS: SONY CUT
PLAYSTATION PRICE TO £129!**

MICRO MACHINES



SMALL BUT **PERFECTLY** FORMED...

**ROUND
1**

EVERY NEW
PLAYSTATION
GAME **REVIEWED**
AND RATED

DESCENT 2
DOWN, DOWN,
DEEPER AND DOWN


NIGHTMARE CREATURES
GOTHIC HORROR

THE BIG FIGHT
CAN SONY KNOCK OUT
NINTENDO'S NEW
CONTENDER?



**"WE COULD GIVE IT UP
TOMORROW,
NO PROBLEM."**



Codemasters 
pure gameplay

**48 HEAD-SPINNING 3D TRACKS. 32 VEHICLES. LOADS OF WEAPONS.
STARTING'S EASY. STOPPING'S THE HARD PART.**

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9/10

"THE GREATEST
MULTI-PLAYER
GAME FOR THE
PLAYSTATION"
94% - PLAYSTATION PLUS

**"MIND YOU,
WE SAID THAT
YESTERDAY."**

MAXIMUM MULTI-PLAYER RACING



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JetRider™

"SURE TO GET THE ADRENALINE PUMPING"

EGM



SONY



COMPUTER
ENTERTAINMENT



DO NOT
UNDERESTIMATE
THE POWER
OF PLAYSTATION

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Can Sony KO the Nintendo challenger?

March 1st sees the long overdue release of the Nintendo 64, and a new challenger for the PlayStation's video game crowd. The Nintendo machine is considerably more powerful than the PlayStation, but the cartridge software is also more expensive. PlayStation Plus speaks to the marketing teams behind the big three consoles, and finds out what Sony, Sega and



Nintendo think of each other, and how they are going to steer their hardware to market domination. It's going to be a long, bloody battle, and each company claims to have a number of strings to their respective bows. We also cast our minds back to previous hardware fights for past case histories...

Micro Machines V3

56



Codemasters' latest PlayStation effort has been caught up in traffic, but has finally zoomed on to the PlayStation and into the mag for its first review. Have Codemasters translated the basic playability of the NES classic over to the Sony machine, or will the new 3D engine ruin its basic simplicity?

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90



The exhaustive guide to PlayStation software currently available

You asked for it, so here it is. Every PlayStation game ever released in the UK listed for your delectation. Every PAL game reviewed has been listed, along with known peripheral and controller compatibilities, along with a brief summary of the title and the score awarded when they were reviewed. The Index is set to be a regular feature from now on, and will be updated every month, thus creating an essential reference point for games buyers who are out bargain hunting.



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WE BRING YOU
THE LATEST
NEWS ON ODD
WORLD,
ACTUA
SOCCER CLUB
EDITION,
MDK AND
EARTHWORM
JIM 3.

Solved: 64

THIS MONTH
COMMAND &
CONQUER
GETS THE IN-
DEPTH
PLAYSTATION
PLUS
TREATMENT.

Media: 94

OUR REGULAR
COLUMN
LOOKING AT
THE LATEST
BOOKS,
COMICS,
VIDEOS AND
MUSIC WITH
JUST A HINT OF
A GAMING
CONNECTION.

Plus Points: 96

YOUR VIEWS
ON THE WORLD
OF THE
PLAYSTATION.

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A SNEAK
PREVIEW OF
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MDK HEADS FOR THE PLAYSTATION • GT OPEN THE DOORS TO ODDWORLD • PLAYSTATION PRICE REDUCED TO £129 • ACTUA GOLF 2 AND ATARI CLASSICS 2 REVEALED...

AS THE N64 EMERGES, SONY TAKES THE INITIATIVE AND SLASHES ITS MACHINE'S PRICE TO AN INCREDIBLE £129. DESPITE PROTESTATIONS THAT THE CUT WASN'T INTENDED TO SPOIL THE N64 LAUNCH, IT IS A VERY CLEVER MOVE INDEED, WITH £129 PLUS CHEAPER CD GAMES OFFERING AN ALTERNATIVE TO NINTENDO'S EXPENSIVE CONSOLE AND CARTRIDGES. IT ALSO LOOKS AS IF SEGA WON'T BE ABLE TO MATCH SONY'S NEW PRICE.

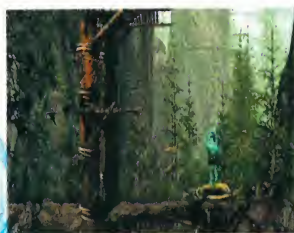
OUR 'BIG FIGHT' ARTICLE HIGHLIGHTS THE BATTLES SO FAR, BUT THE WAR IS FAR FROM OVER.

STEVE MERRETT, EDITOR

OddWorld

ODDWORLD: ABE'S ODDYSEE IS possibly the weirdest arcade adventure ever to grace the PlayStation. Published by GT Interactive in the UK, *OddWorld* is the brainchild of American developers *OddWorld Inhabitants*. Surprisingly it's the company's first ever release, and concentrates on the drab life of a clueless slave labourer named Abe. Employed by RuptureFarms Abe's job is to stamp endless boxes of battered Juicy Pukes, a popular snack treat in the bizarre realm that is *OddWorld*. Anyway, all is good in Abe's life until one day he discovers the main ingredient for RuptureFarms' tasty morsel – him and his fellow Mudokons! Abe's objective, which is of course the player's, is to break free from his shackles and escape from the RuptureFarm.

During its conception *OddWorld Inhabitants* wanted Abe's *Oddyssey* to break new boundaries in video gaming and so created the unique Story Dwelling game system, which is essentially a combination of gaming and storytelling that full-on action of an arcade game with the level of depth and character interaction of a role-playing game. The result is a Flashback-style flick-screen arcade adventure in which Abe must progress solving puzzles working with the other Mudokons to fight against the evil Sligs.



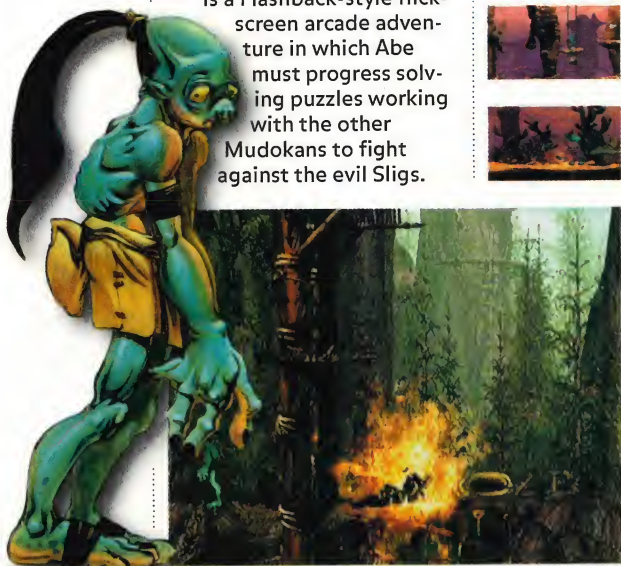
Cleverly, *OddWorld Inhabitants* has introduced a system by which Abe can possess and enemy. By doing this Abe can temporarily control one of the Sligs, thus allowing him to speak in the alien's tongue and also benefiting from their heavy duty weaponry.

Each location in the truly vast game has been beautifully rendered, and is joined by some stunning FMV sequences that seamlessly blend one game area to the next. Character animation is equally impressive, with both

EVEN THOUGH ODDWORLD IS FAR FROM COMPLETE, IT STILL LOOKS NOTHING SHORT OF FANTASTIC. PLAYSTATION PLUS PREDICTS A SURE FIRE HIT.

Abe and the enemy Sligs moving with plenty of character and fluidity.

From the early demo version shown to *PlayStation Plus* the gameplay should rank alongside the faultless presentation, so *OddWorld: Abe's Oddysee* really is game to look out for. However, it's not due for release until much later this although expect to a lot more of this potentially fantastic game in a forthcoming issue of *PlayStation Plus*.



Out Now
On the shelves this month...

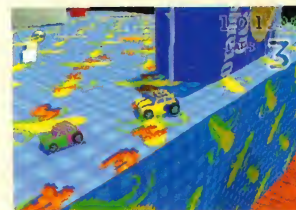
PORSCHE CHALLENGE

Arriving just too late to be reviewed in this issue, *Porsche Challenge* is Sony's pride and joy. It will be critically dissected in next month's *PlayStation Plus*.



MICRO MACHINES V3

Brilliant fun for one to four players, the only down is that's you'll need two multi-taps and another seven joypads! Awarded 94% in this issue of *PlayStation Plus*.



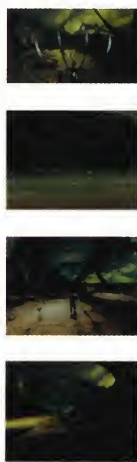


MDK, OR MURDER DEATH KILL to give it its full title, is the latest creation from Shiny Entertainment and promises to be one of the most innovative titles on the PlayStation when it's released this autumn. It's a difficult beast to describe, but the basic crux goes something like this. Game hero Kurt is a futuristic assassin resembling Giger's Alien. Equipped with bio-weapons the objective is to invade a number of alien worlds and essentially frag the ass of everything that moves. However, while this may seem terribly similar to *Doom* it's actually completely different. The reason this is because it's far more effective to switch to sniper mode and concentrate fire on an enemy's weak spot – the head, for example – than pumping bullet willy-nilly.

And this is where MDK is refreshingly different. Rather than simply hunting for extra weapons and ammunition, players find themselves searching for cover while at the same time looking for the perfect spot to fire off a shot at the enemy from afar. This is aided by the splendid alien

worlds on which the game is set, and also by some truly fearsome monsters. In addition to sniping, Kurt has the ability to glide. In fact the bonus stages see the black-clad assassin drifting slowly towards his target, avoiding incoming flak and grabbing bonuses as he falls.

All of this looks as good as it sounds, or at least it does on the PC. The PlayStation version, pictured here, is just as smart and, if Shiny's reputation is anything to go by, the gameplay should be spot on too.



PlayStation Price Slashed to £129!

SONY HAS UPPED THE ANTE IN the next generation console war by dropping the price of the PlayStation to £129 from 24th March. The news comes just as the Nintendo 64 is launched in the UK, and is an aggressive bid for market domination. The announcement will be heavily supported by advertising campaigns and promotions, as follows the drop in price of Sony's home-grown games to just £34.99.

Ray Maguire, Managing Director of Sony Computer Entertainment UK, said, "PlayStation has established itself as market leader in every country around the world. We've now sold 12 million units, with production running at 1 million units per month. This production capacity gives us the opportunity to



market PlayStation at an aggressive, mass-market price point, bringing in a wider range of consumers."

At the time of going to press both Sega and Nintendo were unavailable to comment on the price cut, although it's unlikely Nintendo will change its strategy so near to the launch of the Nintendo 64. Sega couldn't confirm that it was going to follow suit and drop the price of the Saturn.

"IT'S NOT A DIRECT COUNTER-ATTACK AGAINST THE LAUNCH OF THE NINTENDO 64, IT'S JUST THAT THE TIMING IS PERFECT."
SONY'S GUY PEARCE (PICTURED LEFT) INSISTS THE PLAYSTATION PRICE CUT IS NO PANIC MEASURE.

ISS Pro Praised

IN LAST MONTH'S ISSUE WE hinted toward the success currently awaiting *ISS Pro*, and tipped it as being the hot contender for knocking *Olympic Soccer* off its football throne. It seems we're not the only ones to hail *ISS Pro* either, and even though the game only 80% complete at present, Sony's has already acknowledged Konami's efforts. Juan Montes, general manager for software development at Sony Computer



Entertainment Europe, was said, "following our internal reviews we feel that *ISS Pro* is the best soccer title ever published on our platform. SCEE would like to congratulate Konami for doing such an excellent job with the creative and technical achievements shown in this game." *ISS Pro* should be pretty good then, but watch out for the definite review in next month's issue of *PlayStation Plus*.

ACCORDING TO SONY, KONAMI'S ISS PRO IS ALREADY CLAIMED AS THE BEST FOOTBALL GAME ON THE PLAYSTATION. IT'S NOT EVEN OUT YET!

EXHUMED

BMG's give 3D shoot 'em up fans a faster, better looking, and all round superb excuse to go ballistic with an M60 machine gun. Awarded 90% in this issue.



MONSTER TRUCKS

Psygnosis' attempt at off-road racing looks very smart but lacks meaty gameplay and short on lasting appeal. Awarded 82% in Issue 18 of *PlayStation Plus*.



2 XTREME

Sony's sequel to ESPN *Extreme Sports* is both visually dire and uninteresting to play. Check out the first game. Awarded 55% in this issue of *PlayStation Plus*.



HEXEN

The PlayStation has problems shifting the complex levels of id's PC classic. Gameplay is deep enough to ensure maintained interest. Awarded 84% in Issue 18.



ProPinball Time Shock!



REMAINING FAITHFUL TO PROPINBALL: THE WEB, TIME SHOCK! WILL BE PACKED WITH GORGEOUS RENDERED SCENES.

EMPIRE INTERACTIVE FOLLOWS up immensely playable *Pro Pinball: The Web* with the second game in the series, titled *Timeshock!* Themed around time-travel, *Timeshock!* drags the player through four time zones, using the chrome ball and the high-definition dot-matrix display to go chariot racing in ancient Rome, escape from a dinosaur stampede and fighting laser-wielding robots in the future. The objective for each zone is to collect a four crystal fragments which, when combined are used to save the universe from the almighty Timeshock! The table itself is based on a wide-body pinball design and is crammed with all the features of a real-life table. Expect dazzling flashers, super jets, animated slings and winding ramps them, as well as a superb six-ball multi-ball option that will really test your skill. Better still, prove your pinball mettle and eventually player's get to play



around with the table itself, fiddling with the ramps to make it easier to earn extra balls and so on.

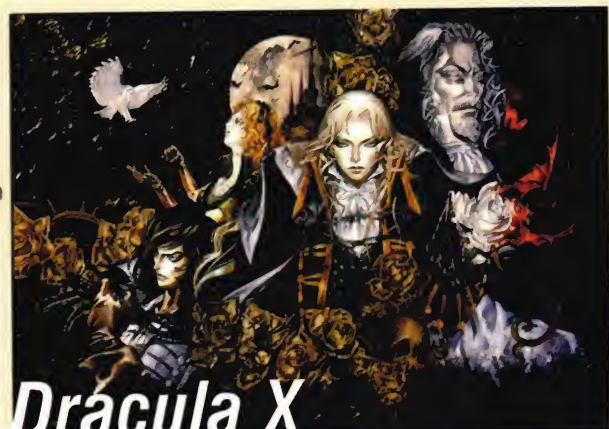
In keeping with *The Web*, *Timeshock!* again boasts high-resolution graphics and extremely smooth animation, plus another soundtrack crafted by ex-The Jam bassist Bruce Foxton and Stiff Little Fingers star Jake Burns, making this one of the most beautifully presented pinball games on the PlayStation. It's due for release this May.

CANNED!



SHOCK! AFTER THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF RELOADED, Gremlin Interactive has canned what was going to be the third in the *Loaded* trilogy, *Fully Loaded*. It comes after the exclusive

news story *PlayStation Plus* ran back in Issue 16, claiming the latest game would be bigger and better than the other two. As it happens, a Gremlin spokesman stated "we felt like we'd pushed the *Loaded* genre as far as it could go. After *Loaded* we added a lot of things to the sequel, *Reloaded*, a lot of puzzles, and we played around with the characters and generally fiddled around with the game to improve as best we could. As a result we don't think we can take the game any further." It's got nothing to do with the second game being a bit naff then?



Dracula X Symphony of the night

KONAMI'S RETURN TO THE PlayStation scene with the latest title in the series which put the Japanese giant where it is today. *Dracula X: Symphony of the Night* is the first 32bit version of Castlevania to appear and continues on from the Super Nintendo version of *Castlevania IV*, so much so that *Dracula X* begins with a playable snippet of the final showdown of the 16bit Nintendo game.


The game once again focuses on Dracula, or rather the destruction of the infamous vampire. It's Dracula's castle that provides the best part of the game's setting then, with the game hero Alucard facing up to the challenge of searching through the magnificent halls and haunted towers. Like the Bellmonts before him, Alucard is armed with the traditional whip with which to lash his enemies, but also boasts an impressive array of slightly more exotic weaponry

including daggers and a very large two-handed sword. The weapons are pathetic compared to Alucard's spell-casting abilities though, which are infinitely more impressive, and for that matter more devastating too. Summoning power from his enchanted cape, Alucard magical attacks appear in the guise of flying weapons and spinning crucifixes, and are accompanied



with some fantastic translucent lighting effects. Another example of this is the yellow vapour cloud, which Alucard can change into at key points during the game. He can also shapeshift into a bat, allowing him to reach other parts of the game.

Light-sourcing isn't the only smart effect to be incorporated into *Dracula X: Symphony of the Night* either, which has some pretty cool sprites rotation and scaling effects too, used both for the backgrounds and the weapons. However, whether the two-dimensional game structure is a logical step forward or is identical to its 16bit counterparts remains to be seen, when the game is released this summer.



IT HAS BEEN
PROPHESED.
BEWARE 1999.

£19.99

The price of
Classic Games
in the
Platinum Collection

- Tekken
- Battle Arena Toshinden
- Air Combat
- WipeOut
- Ridge Racer
- Destruction Derby

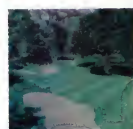


PLATINUM

Actua Golf 2

AFTER THE CRITICAL PRAISE showered on *Actua Golf* it comes as no surprise that Gremlin Interactive is already working on a sequel. *Actua Golf 2* takes the series into the next generation by offering an updated graphics engine that allows for even more realistic presentation. Superb new effects include water reflections, more defined texture-mapped landscapes and lots of new scenery, while the virtual golfer boasts fluid and realistic motion-captured animation.

Actua Golf 2 also includes a brand new control system, but the toughest challenge will come from the six courses mapped and modelled for tournament play. Three of the six are fantasy courses made up from a selection of



the best hole from real life links, while the other three are accurate reproductions of the Oxfordshire, Kiawah Island and Carnoustie. There's even a special treat for golf fans as Peter Alliss, 8 times Ryder Cup Champion and widely recognised as one of the world's best golf commentators, brings together his favourites courses from

around the world in the Alliss 18. Peter Alliss also returns to provide the running commentary, joined by Alex Hay as they pass judgment on all the new splash shots, back spins and high lobbs that are possible with the improved ball logic incorporated in the game.

The same freedom is given to the player to explore each course, viewing the fairways from any number of camera angles and taking a second look at that once-in-a-lifetime hole-in-one using the dynamic replay option. However, this level of realism takes time to develop and although Gremlin reckons *Actua Golf 2* will be on the shelves this May, if the first game was anything to go by we won't see this at least until Christmas.

Actua Soccer Club Edition

GREMLIN INTERACTIVE RETURNS to the football fields with 1997 update of *Actua Soccer*, the all-new version subtitled Club Edition. Based on the same 3D engine as the original game, *Actua Soccer Club Edition* is therefore pretty much identical but features all of the Premier League sides complete with the very latest squad listings. Naturally most

of the bugs that haunted the original game have been ironed out for this enhanced version, and a new look front end has been bolted on that features sticker album-style photographs of player.

Another new feature offered by *Actua Soccer* is the option to create a dream team, picking any player from the Premier League and

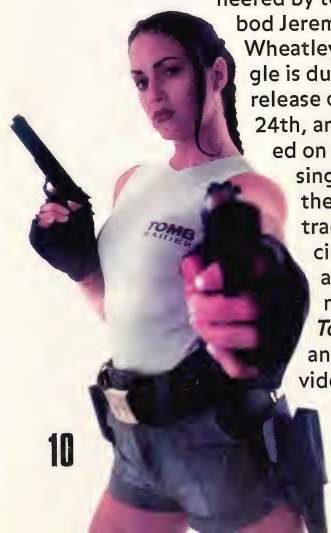
including them in your very own team, before testing them out in a tournament. Once again the voice of football, Barry Davies, returns to provide play-by-play commentary, complete with new phrases as well as a couple of the favourite clichés of old. Add to this the motion captured animation taken from 'top' international footballers

Andy Sinton, Chris Woods and Graham Hyde, and the result should be a decent, if somewhat familiar footie game. Expect a full preview next month.

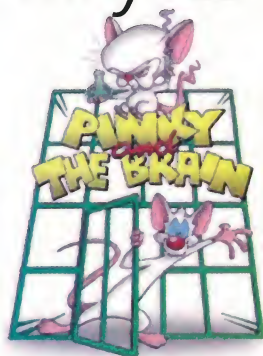


Tomb Singer

Lara Croft, virtual star of Eidos' smash hit *Tomb Raider*, has just signed a record deal to release a single under the Raiders Records label. The track, which is called *Raiders*, is currently being penned by Joe Sang, writer of Aswad's 'Shine', and is to be engineered by top music bod Jeremy Wheatley. The single is due for release of March 24th, and included on the CD single will be the audio track, the cinema advertisement for *Tomb Raider* and the video for the single.



Pinky & The Brain



THE MEGALOMANICAL MICE OF Animaniacs fame are to star in their own video game, Konami has just announced. the game is unlikely to appear until Christmas this year and so details are sketchy, although it will be an rendered arcade adventure in which Pinky & The Brain travel the globe in their ongoing battle to take over the world. Expect more news in the near future.



RECOMMENDED



MICRO MACHINES V3

Codemasters once again prove that gameplay really is of great importance with the small but perfectly formed *Micro Machines V3*. Probably the most enjoyable arcade racer the PlayStation has seen yet.



TOMB RAIDER

The chances are you've drooled over this baby already, but the fact of the matter is *Tomb Raider* is excellent. Combining cinematic atmosphere with cutting-edge gameplay, this game really is a monster.



TWISTED METAL WORLD TOUR

Immerse yourself in an all-action bullet fest in this visually uninspired but fun drive-by shooter. Test drive the some heavy duty vehicles around the globe, but just make sure you're the last one going!



EXHUMED

BMG's fantastic *Doom*-style blaster should be hitting the shelves any day now, and is certainly the fastest, smoothest 3D blaster the PlayStation has yet witnessed. It's not easy though, so wimps need not apply.

Mortal Kombat Legend

NEWS HAS JUST REACHED PlayStation Plus that Williams is currently developing a *Mortal Kombat* role-playing that is planned for release around Christmas. Titled *Mortal Kombat Legend*, the game stars Sub-Zero and is a top-down Goeman-style arcade adventure in which the player explores the vast game map, interacting with other *Mortal Kombat* characters. The overall objective has not yet been confirmed though, but more news is expected from the Williams camp in the very near future.

Low Initial Nintendo 64 Ship Out

PLAYSTATION PLUS CAN CONFIRM rumours that the Nintendo will only be shipping a meagre 20,000 Nintendo 64's in the initial batch, much less than what was originally quoted. As a result demand far outstrips supply, and retailers are unwilling to commit themselves to stocking the machine. The reason for the shortage is because Nintendo is having difficulties producing enough machines for Japan and America, although another batch of machines is said to arrive shortly after the first. Better pre-order one now then.



Atari Classics 2

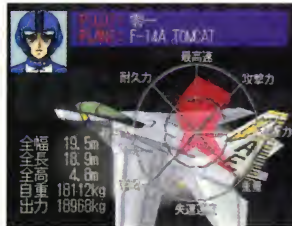
NO SOONER HAS ATARI CLASSICS hit the shelves that details of a follow up are released. *Atari Classics 2*, which isn't scheduled for release until much later this year, will be packed with more recent classics as opposed to first generation arcade games like *Asteroids*, and therefore includes *Paper Boy*, *Gauntlet*, *Marble Madness*, *Millipede*, *Hard Drivin'* and *Road Blasters*. Each is said to be an exact reproduction of the arcade original, boasting the original graphics in all their simplistic glory and hopefully maintain the all-important gameplay. The games are joined by FMV sequences as well as interviews with the programmers and the history behind each title, making this a definite must-have for crusties who used to pump in a pocket-full of 10 pence pieces just to reach the next level in *Gauntlet*.

Wing Over



HAVING CANNED DEADLY SKIES

at the end of last year, JVC climb back inside the cockpit for its arcade aerial combat game, *Wing Over*. Although visually similar to the countless other aircraft games already available on the PlayStation, *Wing Over*'s game structure offers something new. Rather than a single pilot battling against an entire army, players assume the role of wing leader, directing a group of four aircraft, which is pitted against an enemy of equal size. Choosing a 'team' from an extensive list of aircraft, including bi-planes like the Fokker DR1 to jets such as F-14 Tomcat, players have complete control over their aircraft, and can order their



wingmen to attack the enemy or stay back and guard the home base. Mission objectives are assigned to both sides, either to completely annihilate the opponent or take out a tactically important ground structure.

Gameplay is simplified to ensure the action is fast and frantic, and is divided into four beat 'em up-style modes. Tournament mode is the standard dogfight while the free game gives pilots the chance to test the aircraft to their limits. Survival mode throws an endless wave of enemy planes against the player while the versus mode, which uses the serial link, is a two-player game.

JVC insist there are also a number of hidden extras for skilled pilots to find, but these won't become apparent until the game is released in June.

"COOL BOARDERS IS SUPERB".

Mean Machines PlayStation



"Cool Boarders is the top one-player sports game on the PlayStation"

PlayStation Plus 91%



DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF PLAYSTATION

Gruesome!

A DOUBLE STANDARD
EXISTING BETWEEN GAMES
AND FILMS? SURELY NOT...

18

UNTIL YOU'RE 16 YOU CANNOT SMOKE. ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION OR PLEASURES OF THE FLESH ARE NOT LEGALLY YOURS UNTIL YOU TURN 18. SIMILARLY, YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO WATCH HORROR FILMS UNTIL THE SAME COMING OF AGE. VIOLENCE IN FILMS IS HEAVILY CENSORED, WITH EVEN THE TINIEST SPATTER OF BLOOD LANDING AT LEAST A 15



CERTIFICATE. VIDEO GAMES AREN'T AFFECTED QUITE SO MUCH, AS SOFTWARE INDUSTRY WATCHDOG ELSA ADVISES A SUITABLE CERTIFICATION WHICH IS, EVEN THEN, ONLY VOLUNTARY. AS A RESULT GORE-FESTS SUCH AS DOOM AND RESIDENT EVIL GET AWAY WITH A 15 RATING, GIVING PUBESCENT SCHOOL KIDS THE CHANCE TO GO PSYCHO WITH A CHAINSAW WHEN THEY'RE NOT EVEN OLD ENOUGH TO WATCH THE FAKE GUNFIGHTS IN RESERVOIR DOGS.

GAME/FILM TITLE	PLOT	BODY COUNT	MOST GRUESOME DEATH	CERTIFICATION	BUCKETS 'O' BLOOD
DIE HARD/DIE HARD TRILOGY					
	BRUCE WILLIS GOES GUNG-HO TO CAP THE ASS OF COUNTLESS TERRORISTS.	LOADS. BRUCE BAGS A DOZEN BAD GUYS IN THE FIRST MOVIE, BUT BY DIE HARDER THE BODY COUNT SKY-ROCKETS...	WILLIS IS GRAPPLED TO THE FLOOR BY AN EX-MARINE, WHO SHORTLY COMES A CROPPER WHEN A TEN-INCH ICICLE IS RAMMED INTO HIS EYE.	A JUSTIFIED 18 CERTIFICATE MAKES THIS ADULTS-ONLY MATERIAL.	
	DITTO.	HUNDREDS. WILLIS BLOWS AWAY BADDIES, SHOOTS COPS AND MOWS DOWN INNOCENT BYSTANDERS WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELID.	ARMED WITH A LIGHTGUN FOR DIE HARDER, THE PLAYER ENTERS DULLES AIRPORTS AND BLOWS THE KNEECAPS OF UZI-FIRING TERRORISTS. CUE BLOOD BY THE GALLON.	MORE GORE FOR LESS - A MERE 15 CERTIFICATE.	
DAWN OF THE DEAD/RESIDENT EVIL					
	A SWAT TEAM IS LEFT TO BATTLE IT OUT AGAINST HORDES OF THE FLESH-EATING UNDEAD.	A HELLUVA LOT. HEADS ARE BLOWN APART, LIMBS BITTEN OFF, AND ORGANS LIBERATED.	A BIKER IS PULLED APART BY CLAMOURING ZOMBIES. WELL, HE IS IN THE UNCUT VERSION.	JUST SCRAPPED AN 18 RATING FOLLOWING SEVERAL MAJOR CUTS.	
	THE STARS SPECIAL FORCES TEAM ENTERS A MANSION WHICH IS INFESTED WITH BLOOD-THIRSTY ZOMBIES.	TECHNICALLY NO MORE THAN HALF A DOZEN. HOWEVER, IF WE'RE TALKING UNDEAD CASUALTIES THEN IT'S DOZENS!	STARS MEMBER CHRIS REDFIELD FINALLY LOCATES THE SHOTGUN AND PUTS IT TO GOOD USE - BY BLOWING THE DECAYING HEAD CLEAN OFF A STAGGERING ZOMBIE.	WITH MORE BLOOD STAINS THAN AN ABA-TOIR, ONLY A 15 CERTIFICATE WAS AWARDED.	
TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE/DOOM					
	A GROUP OF KIDS STUMBLE ACROSS A FAMILY OF CANNIBALS.	SURPRISINGLY FEW. OF THE FIVE KIDS, FOUR ARE OFFED.	LESS THAN THE HYPER-VIOLENT TITLE SUGGESTS. IN FACT THE VIOLENCE IS NEVER ACTUALLY SHOWN - IT WAS THE FILM TITLE THAT THE CENSORS DIDN'T REALLY LIKE.	BANNED. WITH NO HOPE OF AN EVENTUAL RELEASE.	
	ONE SOLDIER, MENTALLY DERANGED OF COURSE, IS DRAFTED IN TO BATTLE SATAN'S MINIONS.	THE FIRST AND ARGUABLY THE GORIEST BLOOD-BATH ON THE PLAYSTATION BOASTS TONS OF TWITCHING CORPSES.	IT'S A DIFFICULT DECISION WITH SO MANY TO CHOOSE FROM, BUT CHAINSAWING A BULBOUS CACODEMON INTO TINY PIECES IS CERTAINLY ONE OF THE MOST SATISFYING.	IF THIS WAS A FILM IT WOULD BE BANNED. IT'S NOT, SO IT ONLY GETS A 15 RATING.	
THE WIZARD OF OZ/RAINBOW ISLANDS					
	YOUNG DOROTHY FINDS HERSELF 'OVER THE RAINBOW' WHERE ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN.	TOTO IS SENT OFF TO DIE, BUT ESCAPES. THE ACTUAL BODY COUNT IS RATHER POOR - ONE WICKED WITCH.	VICIOUS BITCH DOROTHY DROPS A HOUSE ON A WITCH, AND THEN NICKS HER SHOES. OH, DON'T FORGET THE SCARECROW BEING PULLED LIMB FROM LIMB BY FLYING MONKEYS. GROSS!	A SICKLY-SWEET U, THUS ENSURING REPEATS EVERY CHRISTMAS.	
	YOUNG BUB AND BOB FIND THEMSELVES OVER LOADS OF RAINBOWS, WHERE ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN.	THOUSANDS. BUB AND BOB'S RAINBOW MAGIC IS DEADLY TO ANYTHING IN ITS PATH.	UM. WELL, A BIG SPIDER IS DROPPED TO THE FLOOR, AS IS A TOY HELICOPTER. BUT THE OTHER DEATHS ARE ALL RATHER TAME.	DON'T BE RIDICULOUS.	

TWISTED METAL WORLD TOUR

"GET TWISTED METAL
WORLD TOUR
AND GET IT SOON"

Play Magazine

"THE BEST 2 PLAYER ACTION GAME OF ALL TIME"

Game Informer

SONY



COMPUTER
ENTERTAINMENT



DO NOT
UNDERESTIMATE
THE POWER
OF PLAYSTATION

ROUND 1





With **Nintendo** on the verge of launching its much-hyped 64bit machine here in the UK, **PlayStation Plus** examines what effects will have on the next generation console market, and asks exactly what is Sony and Sega planning to combat this threat.

THE BIG FIGHT

SO YOU THOUGHT THE BATTLE FOR NEXT GENERATION DOMINATION WAS OVER.

Well, it's not. In fact it has only just begun, even though Sony has the upper hand in the 32bit market, out-selling the Sega Saturn with sales figures creeping up to 750,000 PlayStations in the UK alone. There's a new threat to consider though, and while many considered Nintendo out for the count when its 64bit wonder failed to appear last year, the Japanese giant is now back, and it's looking for a fight.

Of course, the winner is already a foregone conclusion. Or at least Sony and Nintendo thinks it is, depending on who you speak to. The truth of the matter is very different indeed, as Sega is heavily promoting the Saturn in the coming year, and while Sony has the luxury of a large installed user-base and an excellent catalogue of software, Nintendo is backed by 64bit technology and brand loyalty. For too long die hard Super Nintendo fans have been waiting for the next big thing, and now Nintendo is only too happy to oblige.

As the marketing hype from the camp of the three contenders steps up a gear and television screens across the nation are flooded with adverts claiming the Saturn/Nintendo 64/PlayStation is the best machine, the fight for commercial supremacy has truly begun.

The battle for domination between two machines is by no means a new trend. In fact the first real scrap for home computer success came from **Sinclair and Commodore**, when the **Spectrum and C64** locked horns to take control of the 8bit market back in the early Eighties.

The Spectrum took an early lead, out-selling the Commodore 64 largely because the latter was almost twice as expensive. Drastic price cuts and superior technology ensured the C64 was soon matching Sinclair's machine in terms of sales, and so the result was pretty much even when the two computers were phased out at the end of the mid Eighties.

Atari wasn't quite so lucky, and although the ST enjoyed enormous success when it was first released in 1986, the Amiga soon became the dominating force in the 16bit market. Again, hardware

prices proved a vital factor, with the cheaper Atari unit still attracting attention even though the Amiga was technically a much better games machine. However, technical specifications and low cost deals weren't the only factors to attract the public's attention, as Commodore and Atari now employed heavy duty marketing and advertis-

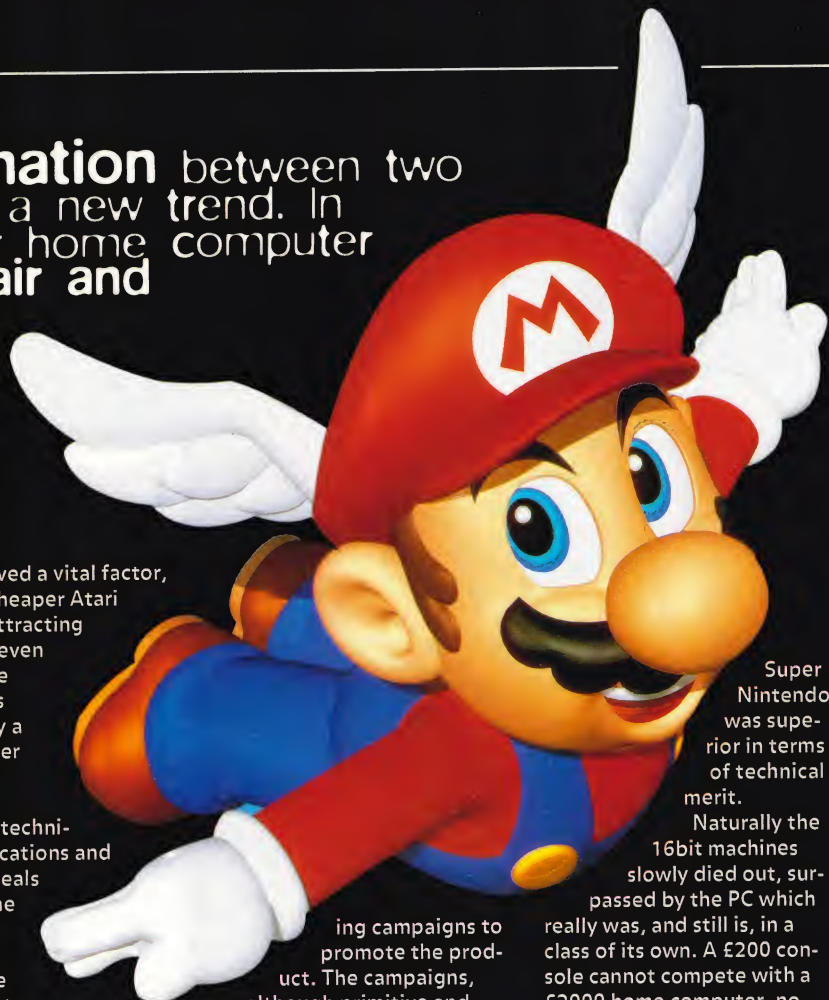
ing campaigns to promote the product. The campaigns, although primitive and low-key compared the hype surrounding the release of, say, a music album, helped both of the machines attain tremendous success, so much so that the Amiga is still around to this day. However, even the conflict between the Amiga and the Atari ST was small-fry compared to the ruck that was soon to ensue.

After the mild success of the Master System in the UK, Sega really pushed the boat out for the release of the 16bit MegaDrive. Thanks to innovative and hard-hitting television advertising, not to mention excellent software support and the constantly falling price tag, the MegaDrive was installed in 3.5 million homes in the UK. Nintendo followed suit with the Super NES, which was again backed by a comprehensive advertising campaign that ignited the vicious war between the two console kings. Like the 8bit war, again the result was incredibly close, the MegaDrive winning on number of units sold although the

Super Nintendo was superior in terms of technical merit.

Naturally the 16bit machines slowly died out, surpassed by the PC which really was, and still is, in a class of its own. A £200 console cannot compete with a £2000 home computer, no matter who it's made by, but what it does offer is technology at an affordable price, which is where Sega's Saturn and slightly later the Sony PlayStation came into the equation. Previous attempts at a next generation console weren't particularly successful, with Atari's Jaguar, the 32X and the 3DO failing mainly because the technology wasn't ready at the time, and very little capital was channelled into marketing the machines properly. Also the gap between 16bit and these pseudo next generation machines was small, and the consumer was looking for something better.

Enter Sega, past masters of both arcade and home systems, who was the first to hit the market with a high-profile 32bit machine, the Saturn. Far more powerful than existing systems, the Saturn offered the thrills of next generation gaming at a price – costing just under £400, the Saturn was by no means an impulse buy and was too pricey for most kids' Christmas lists.



ZX SPECTRUM

COMMODORE 64

TECHNICAL CAPABILITIES

SOFTWARE SUPPORT

NUMBER OF UNITS SOLD

VALUE FOR MONEY

EXPANSION POSSIBILITIES

OVERALL


SUMMARY: THE 8BIT WARS OF THE MID 1980S ENDED RATHER ABRUPTLY WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF THE MORE POWERFUL 16BIT ST AND AMIGA, DRAWING TO A CLOSE WITH BOTH THE SPECTRUM AND COMMODORE 64 SUPPORTED EVENLY BY LOYAL FOLLOWERS. THE SPECTRUM'S MAIN ADVANTAGE WAS THAT ITS LOWER PRICE TAG AND THE SHEER NUMBER OF GAMES AVAILABLE, WHILE THE COMMODORE 64 WAS TECHNICALLY SUPERIOR, DISPLAYING 16 COLOURS ON-SCREEN AS OPPOSED TO THE SPECTRUM'S MEAGRE EIGHT.







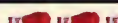






The cheaper, and certainly more effectively marketed PlayStation brought on a pricing war which eventually reduced the cost of both machines to just under £200, with Sony over-taking Sega in terms of sales by installing over 750,000 machines in the UK, almost double the number Saturns currently sold.

There is, however, a new threat to consider. Sony may be in the process of conquering the 32bit war but can it handle the power of the Nintendo 64? After countless delays Nintendo's next generation console is released at the beginning of March, a launch that will undoubtedly affect the market considerably. Quite how, nobody knows, but what is for certain is that Sega and Sony is stopping at nothing to ensure its market shares are safe.

Sony has already started bombarding the public with television commercials and magazine advertisements boasting its huge catalogue of software, and Sega is cur-



ATARI ST VS **COMMODORE AMIGA**

	TECHNICAL CAPABILITIES	
	SOFTWARE SUPPORT	
	NUMBER OF UNITS SOLD	
	VALUE FOR MONEY	
	EXPANSION POSSIBILITIES	
	OVERALL	

SUMMARY: ATARI RELEASED THE ST 520 BEFORE THE AMIGA 500 AND THEREFORE HAD THE LUXURY OF A GROWING USER-BASE BEFORE COMMODORE EVEN ENTERED THE MARKET. HOWEVER, THE AMIGA SOON OVERTOOK THE ST IN TERMS OF SALES, BECOMING THE MOST POWERFUL, POPULAR AND ABOVE ALL, AFFORDABLE HOME COMPUTER DURING THE MID-TO-LATE EIGHTIES. TECH-HEADS FAVOURED THE ATARI ST DUE TO ITS MIDI CAPABILITIES, BUT THE AMIGA WAS SUPERIOR IN PRETTY MUCH EVERY OTHER ASPECT - A LARGER COLOUR PALETTE, A CUSTOM GRAPHICS CHIP, A CUSTOM SOUND CHIP AND THE OPTION TO UPGRADE FROM 512K RAM TO 1Mb. AMAZINGLY, THE AMIGA IS STILL IN USE TODAY.

isn't available yet, you're just creating demand you cannot fulfil. At the moment we're rolling out the first stages of our press campaign now." Indeed, an advertisement for the Nintendo 64 appeared in the last issue of *PlayStation Plus*, telling reader's to believe the hype. A bullish statement indeed, but one that doesn't seem to worry Sony. "I see Nintendo and Sega as competitors, not as a threat", claims Sony's marketing manager, Alan Welsman, before explaining the corporation's current stance. "When we launched, people said Sony had no idea about video games, that we'll go in and disappear. Since we have become market leader in every single territory, and we're not getting complacent so we're going to continue to fight on." While Nintendo and Sony are both sharpening their claws, ready for a fight, Sega remains remarkably cool. "I wouldn't stick my head up my backside and say I don't see Nintendo as a threat at all," Andy Mee, Sega's European marketing director, calmly announces, "but I don't think they'll ►►

"When we launched, people said Sony had no idea about video games, that we'll go in and disappear. We are now market leader in every single territory and we're going to continue to fight on."

Alan Welsman, Sony.


rently following suit. Nintendo's launch strategy, however, is at the other end of the scale and is relatively low-key. Rob Borland, marketing manager for Nintendo's UK distributor

THE, explains: "We have had a lot of television coverage on TV shows such as Live & Kicking and GamesMaster, but there has been no TV adverts yet - there's no point advertising a product that


(1-4) THE GAMES MAY BE EXPENSIVE BUT YOU REALLY ARE PAYING FOR QUALITY. SUPER MARIO 64 HAS BEEN HAILED AS THE BEST GAME EVER, WHILE PILOT WINGS 64, SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE AND MARIO KART 64 ARE ALL TOP QUALITY TITLES.




FOUR EXTREME EXPERIENCES ON ONE DISC




2**X**TREME





COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT

**SKATEBOARDING, MOUNTAIN BIKING,
IN-LINE SKATING AND SNOWBOARDING**



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SEGA

Andy Mee, Director of European marketing.

What is Sega's corporate plan for 1997? Sega is concentrating on programs to basically convert and trade up people from MegaDrives to Saturns. We also hope to pick up some newer people, some new gamers, maybe even picking up some people who are pissed off with the other platforms.

How far ahead do you plan? There are corporate plans that go ahead as five years, but given that any form of games development takes a minimum of 12 months, you have to have a fairly decent knowledge where you're going to be this time next year.

How are you going to maintain or improve your company's position in the marketplace? We're going to be concentrating on the conversion of MegaDrive owners to



Money. Sony has come in fresh and glitzy and spend lots of money, convincing people they have the best machine. At the end of the day, the games are what is important. Sega has an unrivalled stable of arcade games which we can draw on, nobody has the first party titles that we have, and nobody ever will. Sony own Psygnosis yet *WipEout* and *Destruction Derby* have

put down an order for fifteen and have only got one. What they will do of course is, as of the 2nd March, claim that the machine has sold out on the first day – when you've only got 15,000 units you can pretty much sell out of anything. The real fight is going to happen in September through to December, and by that time we'll be sitting on 250 software titles. and

"Sega didn't roll over and die last year and it certainly won't do it this year."
Andy Mee, Sega.

Saturn owners, but also we've got a couple of clever marketing tricks up our sleeves – Sega didn't roll over and die last year and it certainly won't do it this year.

What are the strengths Sega has which will help it overcome its rivals? Sega is recognised as the gamers' games platform. We've been around long enough to know what makes a gamer tick. Secondly, we're going to be looking at acquisitions and licensed-in titles, and also windows of exclusivity – *Quake* will appear on Saturn before any other next generation console, as will *Duke Nukem*. Before Christmas, we had *Tomb Raider* six weeks before it appeared on either the PC or PlayStation. We're also looking to seal more exclusive deals in the near future.

And the strengths of your rivals?

already appeared on our format, and there will be more to come.

What lessons has Sega learnt in the last year?

There has been a change in the games playing public between 16 and 32bit, in that the majority of them are more astute, they ask a lot more questions, and that's where Nintendo are going to have trouble. They'll ask about the number of software titles available and the longevity. I think we've learnt a lot more about our consumers on the broader mass-market too – we always knew our core market, but I think we've learnt a bit about the mass-market consumer.

Is there enough room for three next generation consoles?

I don't think the launch of the Nintendo 64 is going to cause us many problems, it's going to cause them more problems. They've only got about 15,000 units to put into the UK, and so they've alienated independent retailers who've

as we stand today there is only ten software titles in Japan for the Nintendo 64.

What are the key software players for Sega in 1997?

We'll be launching a follow-up to *Worldwide Soccer*, called *Worldwide Soccer '98*, which will be much better than the first. We will also be converting a whole host of Sega arcade games to Saturn and PC.

Where do you see Sega this time next year?

I see Sega being stronger than ever before. We've got a great line-up of Saturn titles coming out and some very exciting arcade titles, and who knows what the merger with Bandai will bring.

be that much of a threat until Christmas."

The reason behind this thinking is largely because it will take Nintendo at least that long to get a decent installed user base, and as ever Christmas is a notorious battleground where everyone is fighting for domination. By then sales figures for both Saturns and PlayStations will have increased, and the number of games available will be approximately 250 for each. There will only be twenty for the Nintendo 64. THE doesn't regard this as a problem, claiming quality will always beat quantity. Welsman doesn't agree: "I completely dispute the fact that Nintendo talk about quality over quantity. *PlayStation Plus*, for example, has reviewed 38 titles scoring over 90%, Nintendo couldn't launch that many in a year. Out of the 200 games that are out there, obviously a few more could be 90%, but then some are niche titles and might not get a good review but people still like them." It really does seem as though variety is one of the key factors that interests the consumer, although quality is obviously far more important. With *Mario 64* and the handful of other titles due for release this summer, Nintendo really does have an



astonishing software line-up and, some would say, the upper hand. "*Super Mario 64* has been lauded by people up and down the land as the best video game ever," Borland enthuses. "It's not just the likes of specialist press that have said that, but also the *Telegraph* and the *Sunday Times*. They have huge adulation for the title." Even Sega and Sony recognise the merits of Nintendo's flagship

**SEGA MEGADRIVE*****SUPER NINTENDO***

TECHNICAL CAPABILITIES

SOFTWARE SUPPORT

NUMBER OF UNITS SOLD

VALUE FOR MONEY

MARKETING CAMPAIGN

OVERALL

SUMMARY: THE 16BIT CONSOLE WAR WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT SEGA AND NINTENDO REALLY LOCKED HORNS, THE MEGA DRIVE SQUARING UP TO THE TECHNICALLY SUPERIOR SUPER NINTENDO. SEGA TOOK AN EARLY LEAD WITH THE MEGA DRIVE BY SWAMPING THE MARKET WITH SOFTWARE, AND WHILE IT TOOK NINTENDO A LITTLE TIME TO CATCH UP, THE QUALITY OF THE GAMES WAS GENERALLY BETTER. THE GAP WAS NEVER QUITE BRIDGED THOUGH, WITH SEGA SELLING MORE MACHINES EVEN THOUGH THE SUPER NINTENDO WAS BACKED BY A HARD-HITTING MARKETING CAMPAIGN AND RECEIVED CRITICAL PRAISE FROM THE PRESS AND PUBLIC ALIKE. THE FIERCE TWO YEAR BATTLE RESULTED IN A DRAW.

game, but are equally confident of their own titles. Welsman cites *Total NBA '97*, *Porsche Challenge*, *Time Crisis*, *Soul Blade* and *Rage Racer* as the key games Sony has to offer this year, while Mee reckons *Worldwide soccer '98* and a whole host of arcade conversions will maintain interest in the Saturn throughout 1997.

Indeed, software will be a key factor which will determine the success of the Nintendo 64, not just the number of titles available but also the

(1-4) TO PICK THE VERY BEST PLAYSTATION GAMES IS INDEED A DIFFICULT TASK, BUT FORMULA 1, RESIDENT EVIL AND WIP EOUT 2097 RATE AS SOME OF THE FINEST GAMES AVAILABLE. CRASH BANDICOOT, WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE PLAYSTATION'S ANSWER TO MARIO, SADLY FALLS SHORT OF THE MARK.

price of each game. Will punter's really pay out £70 for a single game? THE's Rob Borland thinks they will: "If you're offering something uniquely different, which is what we are, we believe people will be prepared to buy games at that price. Besides, cartridge prices are not as high as people first anticipated. The fact is the cartridges are not £80, Pilotwings is £49.99, which is comparable to a 32bit release."

However, other titles do cost up to £70, almost double the price of a PlayStation game. Furthermore, Sony has

recently announced its budget Platinum line, selling games for around £20.

"Platinum is an aggressive marketing stance which helps new buyers get into the back catalogue which can so easily be perceived as passe and old

technical excellence or sheer genius of *Mario 64*. The other side of the coin, and a point Sony is keen to stress, is that the Nintendo 64 is just as prone to software turkeys, as anyone who's played *Cruisin' USA* will agree.

"I don't think Sony and Sega are really a threat. We're at a different level of technology, a higher level, and people want the latest thing."

Rob Borland, THE.

software. Naturally it's highlighted the price difference between PlayStation and Nintendo." Very true, for gamers can buy three Platinum titles for the price of a Nintendo 64 game and still have the best part of a tenner left over. However, the same argument for quality over quantity applies. Let's face it, while *Ridge Racer* and *Tekken* are good games they don't boast the

But for all this, Nintendo still reckon they'll emerge as the market leader this time next year. "I don't think Sony and Sega are really a threat", states Borland confidently. "We're at a different level of technology, a higher level. You listen to what the consumers and retailers are saying, they see the Nintendo 64 rivalling 32bit machines in the same way as 32bit machines



game, but are equally confident of their own titles. Welsman cites *Total NBA '97*, *Porsche Challenge*, *Time Crisis*, *Soul Blade* and *Rage Racer* as the key games Sony has to offer this year, while Mee reckons *Worldwide soccer '98* and a whole host of arcade conversions will maintain interest in the Saturn throughout 1997.



"THE SEQUEL TO THE WORLD'S FINEST BASKETBALL SIM"

Official PlayStation Magazine

SONY

**COMPUTER
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4X

NBA TOTAL NBA 97

OFFICIAL NBA PRODUCT

PlayStation

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SONY

Alan Welsman, Marketing manager.

What is Sony's corporate plan for 1997?

"We're just about to unveil new marketing initiatives but basically it's to continue bringing out enough games to provide variety to the consumer."

How far ahead do you plan?

"We're looking at promotional and marketing activities for Christmas now, and obviously software is a little further ahead than that. As for the machine itself, it stays as it is. To quote the President of the Sony Corporation, Idei, the PlayStation will continue to sell at least until the year 2000 in its current form."

How do you intend to maintain or improve Sony's position in the market place?

"The development of the software and continual expansion of the quality of

we have to PlayStation. Sony Computer Entertainment as a whole only deals with PlayStation so our whole raison d'être is the fact that we've got thirty people in the UK, 500 in Europe, who only work on PlayStation. We've seen presentations from THE and Sega and they're always pushing other lines that they're working on as well. Also I think that the huge variety of software is a definite bonus."



"The PlayStation will continue to sell at least until the year 2000 in its current form."
Alan Welsman, Sony.

the software. I think everyone agrees the difference between first and second generation software has been amazing. Take *Tomb Raider* for example, or *WipEout 2097*, or the difference between *Rage Racer* and *Ridge Racer*, and I still think there's a hell of a long way to go yet."

What are the strengths and weakness of your rivals?

"Nintendo has the bonus that *Super Mario 64* looks like a very good game, while Sega has some of the arcade stuff which is starting to come through. The weakness for Nintendo is definitely the cartridges, the high price of software and the lack of software. As for the Saturn, I think it's difficult to come from a lower installed base and then try to compete with the likes of Sony and Nintendo."

What are the strengths that will allow Sony to overcome its rivals?

"I think it's the commitment

Is there enough room for three next generation machines?

"There are lots of markets that have more than three major competitors. The market shares that we've enjoyed over the last year of 80-85% are unprecedented in most market sectors so we fully accept that there is room for three players. It's just whether Sega can justify it financially. If they can it's better for all of us, because the focus is on the market and the bigger player gets bigger sales. Also it's whether Sega is still focused on the console side of things - we know that they're putting a lot of emphasis into theme parks and PC development, and also they're developing on PlayStation through SegaSoft. They've just put their internet stuff on hold so it looks a bit shaky for them, but there's no reason why they couldn't pull it out of the bag and still compete. Whatever, we fully intend to be market leader by the end of the year, so we may give concessions to our competitors but without a doubt I

still think we'll be the leader."

What lessons have you learnt in the past year?

"Not to underestimate the consumer. We have found that people do buy software of the oddest variety, and variety is what they're after. Quality is also important but I don't really think anyone could criticise PlayStation on the grounds of quality. There's bound to be a few dodgy titles, but *Killer Instinct* and *Mortal Kombat* illustrate that the Nintendo 64 is just as prone. We've also learnt not to pigeon hole our consumers - we've got a 68-year-old guy who plays *Formula 1* and we've also heard that there are four year olds who play around on the PlayStation."

What does March 1st mean to Sony?

"I think we'll watch and wait to see what happens with the Nintendo 64, but

ultimately it means an increase in interest in the sector."

What are the key software players for Sony this year?

"Obviously there's *Total NBA '97*, *Porsche Challenge*, we've got *Rage Racer...* *Soul Blade* and *King's Field* will also figure strongly in our line-up."

Where do you see Sony Computer Entertainment this time next year?

"Market leader with an installed base of 1.6m minimum in the UK, and developing software of good quality like third generation titles that will blow people's perceptions away."

rivalling 16bit machines.

People want the latest thing, they're driven by technology and quality of gameplay, and if you supply that, people will go and buy it." Alan Welsman reckons exactly the opposite, that "the difference between 64bit and 32bit is not having an impact at consumer level. There's no major jump, and although we all know from a technical point of view Nintendo 64 has some advantages, some people can't be bothered with Mario. They just want a racing game that really looked like you were racing a car." Therefore Sony is claiming it will remain market leader this Christmas, a perfectly achievable goal considering Sony has forecast that a modest 1.6 million PlayStations will be installed in the UK by Christmas.

Nintendo's chance of success in the next generation market hasn't really been helped by the constant delay of the machine either, which has undoubtedly made gamers who were initially waiting for the Nintendo 64 to go and buy either a Saturn or PlayStation instead. There is, historically speaking, a loyal Nintendo following, especially in Germany, who will wait to buy the machine on its day of release, and Nintendo can always rely on this hardcore group.

However, getting hold of a machine on March 1st could be difficult unless you've pre-ordered, as initial shipments are said to number a mere 20,000. "It's no secret



that supplies are going to be very short for the first few weeks, but we don't want to create demand that's completely out of whack with supply, that just leads to a lot of frustrated consumers", explains Borland. Surprisingly Sony reckons

they could have sold at least double that, and could possibly sell 600,000 units in the UK during 1997. "We've opened up the market", claims Welsman. "Last year PlayStation did generate a lot of interest in the video

greater investment in soft and hardware development. So it's not really a case of whether the Nintendo 64 is better than the Saturn or PlayStation - we'll leave that argument to the school kids - but what is important is that

The Nintendo 64 has been a victim of its own hype, so much so that demand for the machine is so high in Japan and the States, Nintendo has had trouble keeping up production for those two market places, let alone the UK.

game market and as a result I think Nintendo is coming into a less hostile market place. Generally I think the market-place this year is going to be phenomenal, because everyone is going to be focused on it."

The delay of the Nintendo 64 was unavoidable though, as THE wanted to ensure everything was perfect before the machine was on put on sale to the public. "It was a matter of making sure the PAL conversion was correct and making sure the contents of the box will work straight away. Sega launched the Saturn a bit prematurely, and everyone had to go out and buy an RF lead, which led to a lot of frustrated consumers." THE even go as far as to say the Nintendo 64 has been a victim of its own success, and such is the hype for it in Japan and in the States that Nintendo has had trouble keeping up production for those two market places, let alone the UK.

Whatever the outcome, whether Nintendo over-take Sony or indeed if Sega makes a last minute bid for next generation domination, one thing's for sure. The launch of the Nintendo 64 will help broaden the interest in the video games market which is most definitely a good thing. If more people get into consoles, the more money is injected back into the industry, which leads to

the three dominating forces in this industry remain at loggerheads with each other. Strong competition from opposing forces will ensure Sega, Sony and Nintendo will be constantly striving to out do their rivals, producing more



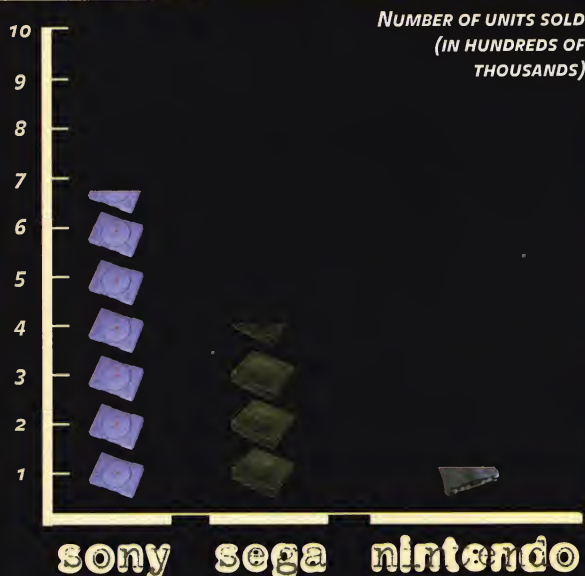
SONY PLAYSTATION

SEGA SATURN

TECHNICAL CAPABILITIES	SONY: 10 icons, SEGA: 5 icons
SOFTWARE SUPPORT	SONY: 10 icons, SEGA: 5 icons
NUMBER OF UNITS SOLD	SONY: 10 icons, SEGA: 5 icons
VALUE FOR MONEY	SONY: 10 icons, SEGA: 5 icons
MARKETING CAMPAIGN	SONY: 10 icons, SEGA: 5 icons
OVERALL	SONY: 10 icons, SEGA: 5 icons

SUMMARY: A NEW PLAYER IN THE VIDEO GAME SECTOR MADE THE BATTLE FOR CONSOLE SUPREMACY EVEN FIERCER, WITH THE ONCE-DOMINANT SEGA FALLING BY THE WAYSIDE UNDER THE MIGHT OF JAPANESE GIANT SONY AND ITS NEWEST CREATION, THE PLAYSTATION. ALTHOUGH THE FIGHT IS STILL FAR FROM OVER, THE ODDS ARE VERY MUCH ON SONY'S SIDE - WITH AROUND 750,000 PLAYSTATIONS SOLD IN THE UK COMPARED TO 300,000 SATURNS, THE CHANCES OF A LAST MINUTE COMEBACK BY SEGA ARE SLIM, ESPECIALLY AS SONY IS BEEFING UP ITS MARKETING CAMPAIGN TO COMBAT THE NINTENDO 64. ALL OVER BAR THE CEREMONIES.

SOLD!



THE STORY SO FAR. SONY IS IN THE PROCESS OF WINNING THE 32BIT WAR, WITH THE PLAYSTATION HAVING SOLD OVER DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF SEGA SATURNS. THE NUMBER WILL RAPIDLY INCREASE OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS DUE TO THE DRASTIC PRICE CUT TO £129, AND 1.6 MILLION UNITS WILL BE INSTALLED IN THE UK BY CHRISTMAS. AS FOR NINTENDO, ONLY TIME WILL TELL, ALTHOUGH THE INITIAL SHIPMENTS WAS EATEN UP BY PRE-ORDERS. MORE MACHINES ARE EXPECTED VERY SHORTLY, AND SONY HAS GUESSED THAT UP TO 600,000 NINTENDO 64S COULD BE INSTALLED BY THIS TIME NEXT YEAR.

(1-4) ALTHOUGH THE SATURN HAS ONLY SOLD 350,000 IN THE UK, IT DOES BOAST SOME EXCELLENT TITLES. ARCADE CONVERSIONS SUCH AS VIRTUA COP 2 AND SEGA HAVE MANAGED TO SELL THE MACHINE ALONE, AND WITH VIRTUA FIGHTERS MEGAMIX, MANX TT AND WOLDWIDE SOCCER '98 DUE FOR RELEASE IN THE NEAR FUTURE, THE SATURN IS BY NO MEANS A WRITE OFF.



NINTENDO

Rob Borland, Marketing manager for Nintendo's UK distributor THE.

What is your corporate plan for 1997?

"It basically revolves around domination of the UK video games market. We've had tremendously successful launches in Japan and the US, and it's given us an indication of the potential success of what Nintendo 64 has to offer. Our ambition is to match the installed bases of Sega and Sony over the course of the next year."

How does THE intend to maintain or improve Nintendo's position in the UK market place?

"We're putting the finishing touches to what is going to be the best launch the UK has ever seen in terms of video gaming. We're backing it with a thumping great marketing budget to ensure that the Nintendo 64 is launched into the market place and gains the maximum possible attention. However, if the product doesn't live up to the hype then you won't succeed."

"What Sony has in its favour is a great quantity of games, but the quality of some of those titles is questionable."

Rob Borland, THE.

What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of your rivals?

"What Sony undoubtedly has in its favour is a great quantity of games, but the

Is there enough room for three next generation machines?

"I would hope that there is but if we're realistic, there may not be sufficient space on retailer's shelves to stock each of these three consoles."

What lessons has Nintendo learnt in the past year?

"One lesson that has been reiterated over the past few months is the loyalty consumers have with Nintendo - they're absolutely

passionate about Nintendo. We've had people on the phone who have said they wouldn't buy a PlayStation right now because they'd lose too much money trad-

ing it in for a Nintendo 64. Another thing that has really come home is that you can't fool people, they'll go for the quality of the product, and if they believe in something because it's always delivered enjoyment then why change."

What does March 1st mean to you?

"It really is like Christmas coming again. There's such a buzz of excitement in the office, people are totally excited about the prospect of March 1st. It's tremendously exciting"

Where do you see Nintendo this time next year?

"Top of the heap, without a doubt."

games of a higher quality and hopefully, in the long, for a cheaper price. Maybe the Nintendo 64 isn't such a bad thing for the PlayStation after all.

The next few months will see an exciting change in the video game market, with the Nintendo 64 undoubtedly affecting sales of both the PlayStation and Saturn. The price cut of the PlayStation will also spice up the action, and so PlayStation Plus will be carefully monitoring the Nintendo 64's progress and how it directly affects both Sony and Sega. Starting from next month we'll be taking a regular look at the trends and changes that the Nintendo 64 has forced, and how this will affect the market and ultimately you. We'll see you then.



NINTENDO 64

SONY PLAYSTATION

TECHNICAL CAPABILITIES	
* SOFTWARE SUPPORT	
* NUMBER OF UNITS SOLD	
VALUE FOR MONEY	
MARKETING CAMPAIGN	
* OVERALL	

SUMMARY: NINTENDO CLIMB INSIDE THE RING TO CHALLENGE SONY WITH ITS RECENTLY RELEASED 64BIT MACHINE. WITH ITS ESTABLISHED USER-BASE AND ARRAY OF SOFTWARE, THE PLAYSTATION HAS AN OBVIOUS ADVANTAGE, BUT NINTENDO DISTRIBUTOR THE IS CONFIDENT NINTENDO'S UNTARNISHED TRACK RECORD AND LOYAL FOLLOWING WILL ENSURE HIGH PROFILE AND EXTREMELY SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH. HOWEVER, WITH ONLY 20,000 UNITS INITIALLY AVAILABLE AND A MEAGRE FOUR GAMES, COSTING UP TO SEVENTY POUNDS EACH, HAS NINTENDO AT LAST BITTEN OFF MORE THAN IT CAN CHEW?

* THE NINTENDO 64 IS RELEASED ON MARCH 1ST AND, AT THE TIME OF WRITING, IS ACCOMPANIED BY ONLY FOUR GAMES. HOWEVER, UK DISTRIBUTORS THE PLAN TO RELEASE APPROXIMATELY FOUR GAMES A MONTH, COSTING UP TO £70 EACH. WITH ONLY 20,000 UNITS SHIPPING IN THE FIRST BATCH THE NINTENDO 64 WILL SURELY BE IN GREAT DEMAND. WHETHER THE RETAILERS CAN MATCH THIS DEMAND IS A DIFFERENT MATTER ENTIRELY.

ROUND 3

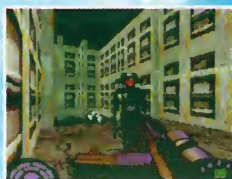
quality of some of those titles is questionable. There are the big games that

LucasArts Entertainment Company presents

STAR DARK FORCES WARS™



“...at last
the wonder of the
Star Wars™ universe
comes to the
Sony PlayStation™”



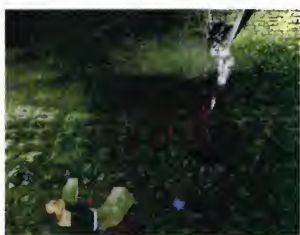
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Nightmare Creatures



omb
Raider
impressed
a lot of peo-

ple, but for some it wasn't exactly what they wanted. They said that while the 3D graphics were awesome and they liked the running around and solving puzzles, they just wanted a bit more... action. And while *Resident Evil* offered its fair share of shooting thrills as well, it still sat very much in that camp they call adventure. So where do you go if you want great



graphics and action? Well what about *Nightmare Creatures*, as it has 3D graphics to die for, tons of great places to run around and more action than you can shake a severed head at. It's an action adventure with the emphasis firmly on the action, set in Victorian England in 1834 during the second Great Fire of London. The recent revival of a supposedly long-dead secret society called the Brotherhood of Hekate,

under the leadership of the mysterious Adam Crowley, the Great Fire and the emergence of some monstrous creatures which have overrun the city seems to be more than just a coincidence, but someone is going to have to put an end to this terror before they can unravel the mystery. This comes in the form of two heroes who set out into the streets and plan to rid the capital of its dark menace or die trying to do so. There are 18 levels to fight through, ranging through many different terrains and populated with a huge array of fierce creatures for you to destroy. Hopefully this should give the action junkies exactly what they've been asking for...

SHIRLEY?

You take on the role of one of two characters to combat the monstrous beasts, either Ignatius... or Shirley. Ignatius is a priest who seems to follow an extra commandment along the lines of 'thou shalt beat up



any monsters who get in my way'. He's armed with a staff, and while he may not be the most agile of the two, he certainly has enough muscle to dish out the damage. Shirley on the other hand

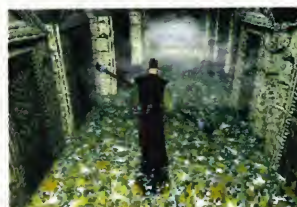
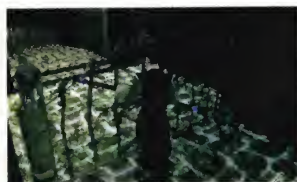


cuts gracefully through the enemy with her sword. She might not have a lot of power, but she more than makes up for it with her speed. The characters are beautifully motion captured



and show it off to great effect whether running down the misty streets, or scrapping with the wildlife. Each character has a variety of different moves which are accessed with a simple con-





trol system which allows you to kick, jump and strike with the minimum of fuss. There are even a few special moves which, with some expert timing, should guarantee you a quick kill. But it's the small touches that really make them look good. If your character's energy is low, you'll see them visibly slouch when they stand still, trying to get their breath back, Ignatius even tries to prop himself up on his staff while he rests. Another satisfying move is when the characters are confronted by closed doors and gates, instead of gently opening the door, they kick it



SHIRLEY MIGHT NOT LOOK AS MEAN AS IGNATIUS, BUT DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THIS PLUCKY AMERICAN FOR AN INSTANT. SHE'S FAST WITH HER SWORD AND AS AGILE AS A CAT.

BACK YOU HEATHEN DEVILS

There are 21 characters and monsters in *Nightmare Creatures*, and you can bet that their driving purpose in life is not to make you a cup of tea and offer you a bun. No, these monsters mean business and their business is turning you into a bloody smear on the streets. To save you from unnecessary terror (and to make sure you get some real surprises during the game), we're only going to show you a few of the beasts.



MUTANTS

Your main foes in the early levels, these freakish fiends aren't too tough to take down once you've mastered your moves. They do tend to come in greater numbers later in the game though, so be careful.



GOLEM

Built like a brick comode, the Golem is a stony looking giant who can take and give out quite a lot of damage. If there's no water around to knock him into then you had better get ready for a rather tough battle.



BANSHEES

Demon women with wings to be more precise. They swoop down at you trying to do as much damage before you can retaliate. Difficult to hit with a hand to hand weapon, they're easy hits with the flintlock pistol.



GARGOYLE

Another winged fiend, the Gargoyle (situated on the left of the picture) likes to walk as well as fly, and so is much easier to hit. The problem of course is that he's a lot tougher than your average harpy. Handle with care.

open Starsky and Hutch style and continue on their way.

STREETS OF LONDON

Once on the streets the first thing you realise is that the atmosphere is quite incredible. Mist hovers in the air, making you think that anything could leap out at you at any moment, and the gloomy shadows only add to that feeling. The textures of the

street itself, as well as the walls of the buildings are incredibly detailed and this, along with the overall quality of the graphics makes you think that the game would be justified if it ran even a little bit slow. However, 'slow' isn't in *Nightmare Creatures* vocabulary, but 'smooth' and 'fast' certainly are. The characters and monsters move at a swift pace and the combat

itself is fast, fluid and fun. Light sourcing is used extensively, from the street lamps which light your way to the fires which try to light you up. The shadows are just as good, cast realistically from the lights and making for a worryingly realistic looking scene. The game is set all over London in the night of the second Great Fire, and as you progress you can see that

the flames do also. As you near the end of the game they become a significant obstacle and threat as corridors are aflame and fallen timbers block your path. You have to either play it safe and find another way around or brave the flames and take the direct route. The levels themselves are in a variety of different areas, each one impeccably detailed, and would be

IT'S NOT AN UZI, BUT IT'LL DO...

Hand to hand combat might be an honourable way to fight, but there's not much point being honourable and dead. So to give you an extra edge there are a number of extra weapons to give those denizens of hell a damn good thrashing.

FLINTLOCK

The flintlock may be a simple pistol, but it's a great backup weapon. If you don't want to get too close to an enemy or just want a quick take down then this is ideal. Perfect for using on those hard to hit banshees.

BURST GUN

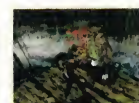
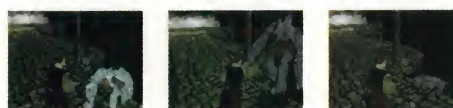
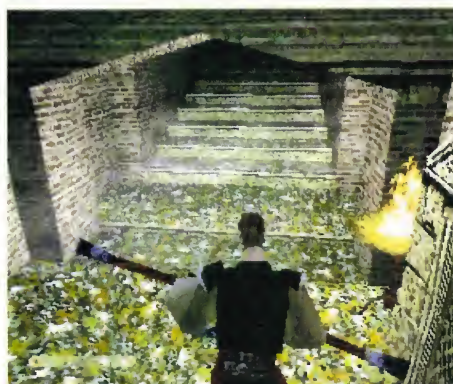
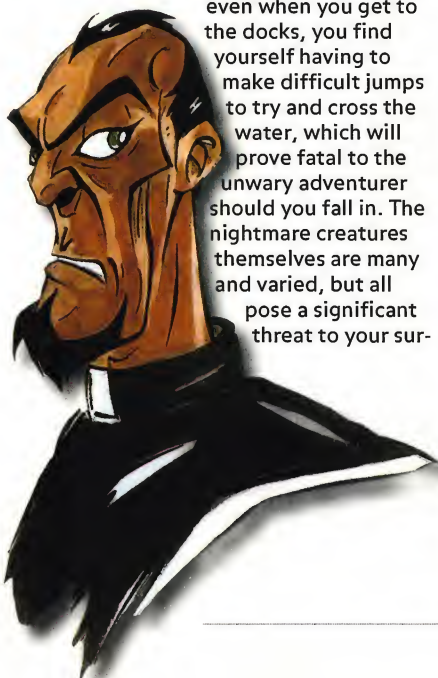
This is a weaker but more versatile weapon which your chosen hero sweeps around their body as they fire. It allows them to shoot behind as well as in front in one swift movement and is therefore ideal when surrounded by the enemy.

MOLOTOV COCKTAIL

For the hero who needs explosives on a budget, this handy bomb will do some instant hard and hot damage to anyone on the receiving end. Burn you foul demon spawn!



scary enough if they weren't filled with monsters. Gothic churches are surrounded by dark graveyards, and as you pass the tombstones, lost spirits rise into the air adding to your feeling of unease. The streets lead you under archways and through narrow alleyways, all the time the mist hanging in the air, and even when you get to the docks, you find yourself having to make difficult jumps to try and cross the water, which will prove fatal to the unwary adventurer should you fall in. The nightmare creatures themselves are many and varied, but all pose a significant threat to your sur-



As you can see the lighting and misting effects are quite incredible and create a terrific gothic horror atmosphere.

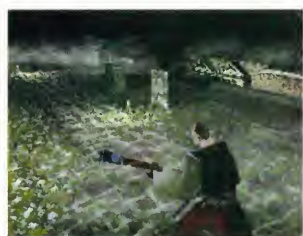


vival. Harpies fly out of the night and into your face, Golems lumber menacingly towards you, and others are simply too strange and grotesque to describe, although there are some who look like terrifying giant insects who will need more than a slap with a rolled-up newspaper. And these beings aren't stupid push overs. They retreat and attack with an impressive artificial intelligence which means you'll often have to plan your attacks carefully, especially when you are faced with a group of enemies. Unfortunately, there are occasions when you won't be able to plan, since some mon-

sters will try to ambush you, leaping from coffins and doorways when you least expect it and giving you a nasty shock in the process. Also they are relentless adversaries, because once you encounter one, even if you run away it will continue to follow you. This doesn't help if while you are escaping you find yourself in front of another beast, so a careful combat strategy is needed if you are to succeed. While they may be an evil bunch, all of the creatures look fantastic and you'll often find yourself taking more damage than necessary because you are concentrating on how incredible your opponent looks rather than the fight itself. They make the inhabitants of *Resident Evil*'s mansion look sluggish and simplistic. And this is no easy thing when you realise that each of the 18 levels loads just once, making for an uninterrupted horror fest, which doesn't pause every time you enter a new area.

WHAT THE WORLD'S BEEN WAITING FOR? *Nightmare Creatures* looks set to be a fighting game with a difference, since it doesn't make any pretensions to be anything other than a huge dollop of action wrapped in

some fantastic visuals. This mixture of Gothic Horror and fast gameplay means that it should please the action purists who liked the looks and ideas behind games like *Resident Evil* and *Tomb Raider*, but wanted something that they could just pick up and play rather than spend many hours working out the complex puzzles. Well this could certainly be the game that will keep them happy, since all you have to do is find your way through the levels and stay alive, which considering the challenge you're up against should be more than enough to keep you busy. The version we saw was far from complete but was so impressive that we should be looking at a possible action classic when the final code is released sometime in the next few months.





БЕДЛАМ



"IT'S GOT GAMEPLAY UP TO ITS EYEBALLS"

PLAYSTATION PLUS



MIRAGE™



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Spider



needed to take into account the fact that the animal walked on four legs. At this stage people started to cruelly quip that the programmer's next project would be to design the ultimate nightmare – a spider.

"When we started up the company over here it seemed like a good idea to carry that joke on", head of the Boss Game Studios, Colin Gordon explains. "That's how these products usually start, someone says hey what if..."

As the development process got under way, the 20 strong team soon discovered that using a spider as a central character opened up all sorts of possibilities to explore. With a normal platformer the central premise has always been that the player has to jump along horizontal ledges and if a gap is misjudged, then its curtains for the hero. A spider on the other hand could climb under platforms, fall from great heights, even walk up walls that were only previously used for their looks. These

With the sheer number of platform titles that have been released in the arcades, on computers and consoles, achieving a degree of originality can't be easy. When a software house first thinks about putting together a quality title in this genre, half the battle must be to come up with some kind of innovative angle that pushes the



technology or game play. PlayStation platform games, perhaps responding to the infamous *Mario 64*, have recently tended to concentrate on building 3D environments. Creating startlingly original characters, either in terms of looks or the way that they interact with back-

grounds, hasn't been at the top of the priorities list. It would seem that almost every possible variation on the theme on characters, enemies, power ups or setting has already been covered at some time or another. When customers seem to have seen it all before, where do software houses turn for inspiration? In the case of the newly formed Boss Game Studios, which is based in Seattle, the first glimmerings of a brand new concept came from a joke that snowballed. The result is an eight legged romp called *Spider*.

A NEW BREED

One of the Boss programmers had been working on the *Lion King* for the SNES and MegaDrive before he joined the company and this project threw up certain design difficulties. Simba was quite different from normal video game characters because his body had to be elongated and animation



IN SPIDER THE PLAYER IS PITTED AGAINST BATS, WASPS, RATS AND OTHER COMMON CREATURES. THESE ENEMIES HAVE ESCAPED FROM A NANOTECHNOLOGY LAB, SO ARE NATURALLY ARMED WITH HIGH-TECH WEAPONRY.



Release : APRIL
Company : BMG
Price : £44.95
Players : 1
Genre : PLATFORM

qualities could fundamentally change the way people view this genre, literally turning the world of platform games up side down.

WEIRD SCIENCE

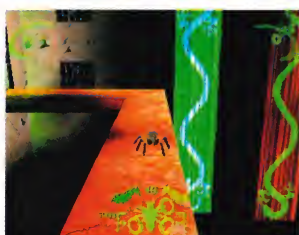
Because the concept of the game became the most important feature, the plot initially took a back seat while the team tried out new ideas. "The story line is completely irrelevant", Colin points out. "The key for us was that the concept and the game play came first as opposed to a bunch of Hollywood types going hey, we've got this really cool movie script, can we make a game out of it."

Nevertheless a story line had to be invented that would explain the use of an insect in a video game, and the tale goes something like this. Dr. Michael Kelly, who is undertaking ground breaking research in the application of nanotechnology, has fallen under the watchful eye of a powerful high-tech corporation. Kelly has invented a revolutionary neural transmitter, that allows him to project his consciousness into cybernetic machines. Aware of the potential military applications of the equipment, the evil company send agents to the lab and during the raid the scientist is seriously wounded. As the Doctor's body falls across the lab equipment, a neural transmitter is fused to his nervous system causing his

consciousness to be imprinted onto the nearest cybernetic organism. Kelly's body is removed by the agents and now his mind is trapped within an artificial spider. With your help he must track down the perpetrator of this crime and retrieve his body before it's too late.

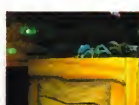
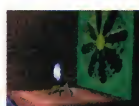
PRETTY POLYS

The arachnid in question is built up from 600 polygons and movement was a particularly difficult problem to conquer. Boss Game Studio has a



sister company that produces films and believe it or not, here software designers experimented with motion capture techniques for the spider. The process involves attaching ping pong balls to joints, filming movement and then plotting points on a computer to construct a simple skeleton. As this method would be more than a little impractical considering the size of the subject, large puppets were used at first, but the effect proved to be unrealistic. In the end a pet tarantula was brought into the studios for inspiration.

As the creature under the player's control is an artificial form of life, hairy limbs can be swapped in for bolt on parts that act as power ups. A variety of metal weapon legs have been left dotted around levels to cut a path through the hordes of



SUPER SPIDER

As the arachnid cyber creature in *Spider* has the same qualities and abilities as its real life counter part, it is possible to pull off all kinds of special moves and use the scenery in a fairly unusual way. The following shots demonstrate some of the tricks our eight legged friend can pull off.

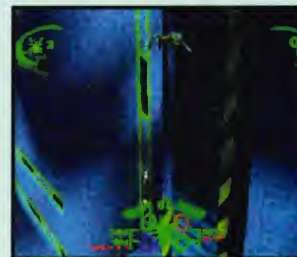


CLIMBING WALLS

Crawl up any vertical surface, no matter how slippery or steep. This way you can reach areas that at first glance appear inaccessible.

MOVING ALONG CEILINGS

Want to crawl underneath platforms or up side down across the ceiling? No problem - you're a spider, you've got amazing sticky legs.



WEB ROPES

Dangle from silk rope, swing from side to side and then jump off. Often levels contain items just out of reach so this ability requires experimentation.

FALL FROM HEIGHTS

Drop any distance without dying so long as there's a platform below. On some stages such as the Warehouse the drops are infinite.

baddies. Hardware includes missile launchers, boomerangs, mines, flame throwers and gas sprays. Requiring at least some of the eight limbs to be used solely for the purpose of movement, up to four legs can be replaced with shiny upgrades. Two fit into front slots and count as offensive weapons so missiles or the flamethrower would go in her. The remaining couple sit at the back end counting as defensive power ups so mines and shields go here. Collecting new legs for all the available slots turns the whole spider into a shiny cyber creature indicating maximum power up.

Loads of angry enemies will ensure that the player's quest for success isn't an easy one. As the cybernetic mind machine is able to cross all kinds of surfaces, players should be given the choice of

either blasting or dodging their way out of trouble. Black widow spiders, scorpions, suicidal flies, slugs, earwigs, bats, rats are said to be highly detailed as each is constructed from around 400 polygons. Over sized humans were left out of the equation because they just didn't look detailed enough amongst



carefully created insects. At one point in the development process designers were working on a train station level that contained guards that thumped down rubber stamps which needed to be avoided. Restrictions on the number of polygons that could be used however, meant that this stage had to be scrapped.

RETRO ROOM

Thirty one other levels, including seven bonus areas, will make it through to the final version. Action begins in Kelly's lab, which is filled with high tech equipment and patrolled by some of the easier to overcome adversaries. After this introduction factories and production

lines, containing conveyor belts and precarious crates, lead to sewer systems which eventually open out into parks, city streets and beyond. Collecting broken parts of spinning discs will access the bonus games, one of which is the '70s Room which is crammed with out-dated stereo equipment

SQUISH

As you would expect from a platform game, the player must experiment with methods of avoiding dangerous obstacles. Some of these kill instantly such as areas of slimy water, others such as the pressing devices or spurts of fire require timed dashes to avoid a grizzly end. Then there are features like the conveyor belts that aren't intrinsically dangerous but have a habit of moving you into trouble. The only way to deal with all of these will be trial and error, but then that's the point of exploring a 3D world, isn't it.



and lava lamps. It is possible, and sometimes absolutely necessary, to revisit areas that have already been completed and in this way the player can be built up a full arsenal of weapons. Before the scientist can reach his decaying body, three bosses must be destroyed. Each of these are said to be very different, with their own AI programming and styles of movement, and are promised to be extremely bizarre.

It's almost as if a game wouldn't be complete these days without a ton of Full Motion Video to keep customers happy between game action, and as you'd expect this trend has been amply catered for in *Spider*. The story line is outlined using a long rendered sequence, and on completion of each of the

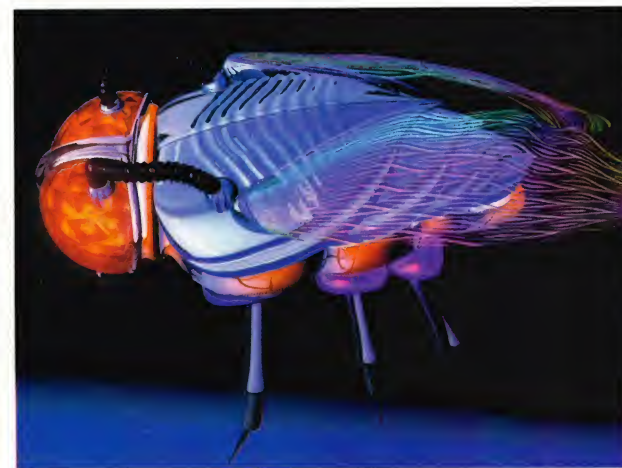


worlds more cut sequences graphically keep the players up to date on various plot developments.

Spider has already been released in America and there people have been comparing the game to *Pandemonium*. At E3 last year Boss Game Studios and Crystal Dynamics were situated opposite one another when they were showing off early versions of their products. Colin Gordon says that the two were able



to learn from the meeting and he can see why the games might appear similar in certain ways. For instance both use a 3D environment which can only be moved through in a left or right direction, both have slide sections, etc. If *Spider*'s game play does come close to *Pandemonium*'s, and then the product manages to add a brand new angle to the genre with its creepy crawly character, its sure to be one of those experiences that is difficult to forget.



AN EVIL CORPORATION RAIDS A SCIENTIST'S LAB TO STEAL MILITARY TECHNOLOGY. THE SAID SCIENTIST FALLS INTO EQUIPMENT AND HIS MIND IS TRANSPORTED INTO A CYBER SPIDER. THE SEARCH IS ON FOR HIS HUMAN BODY.

Area 51 does not exist.

And if you're smart, you'll stop asking questions.

This is not a game. This is a warning.

AREA 51

you can't get in but you can take it home.

The Smash Hit Arcade game that shows you what your government won't.

MIDWAY

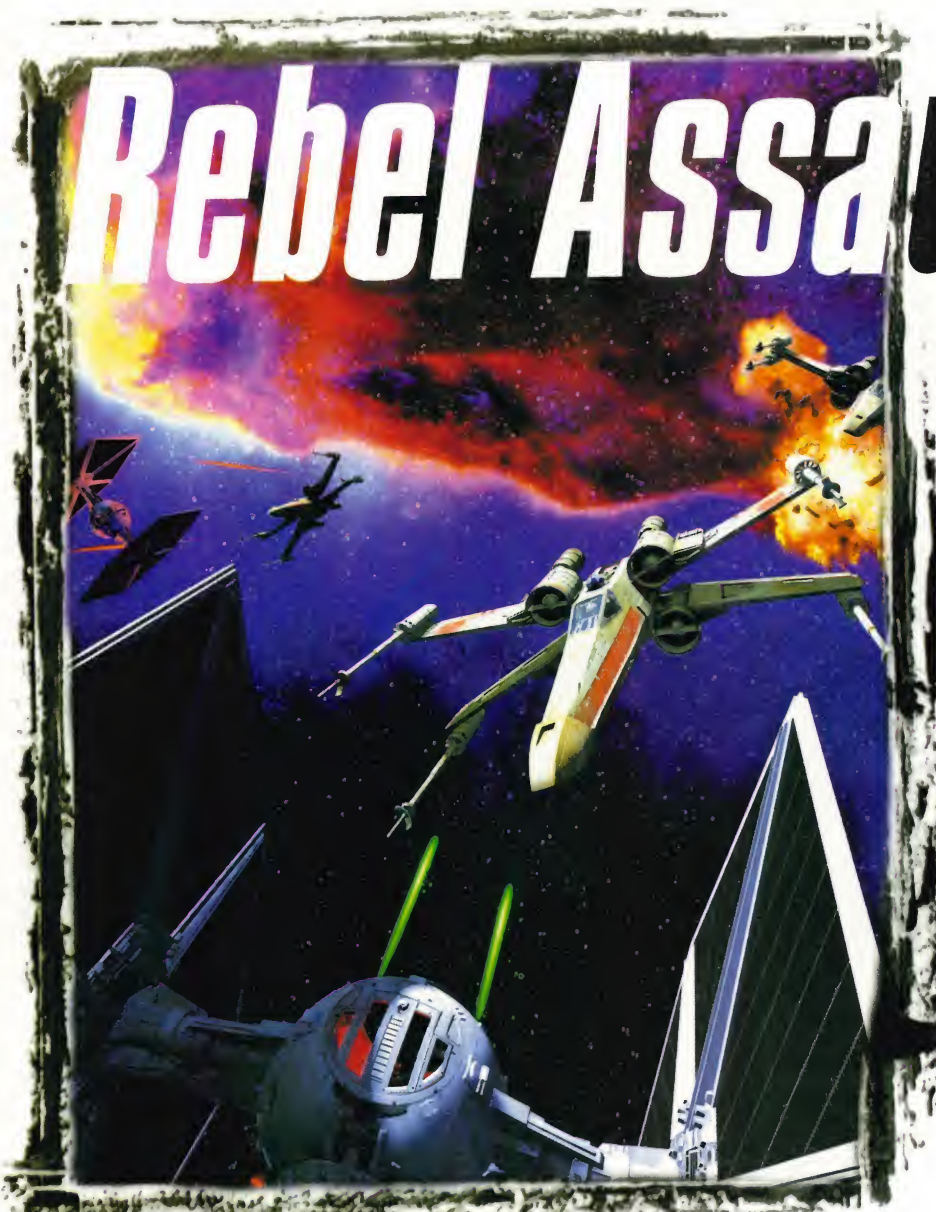



GT Interactive Software
(Europe) Ltd.
<http://www.gtinteractive.com>

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WITH **REBEL ASSAULT 2** GAME STYLES ARE SPLIT BETWEEN GROUND BASED LASER COMBAT, DOG FIGHTS AND RACING THROUGH OBSTACLE COURSES.



1t's incredible that 'Star Wars' was made 20 years ago and yet still it manages to command so much respect and adoration. With the much hyped release of the new edition of the first part of the trilogy, box office receipts should see that it becomes the most successful motion picture of all time. Although when this classic was made, 2001 had already shown how special effects should be used in science fiction films, George Lucas' epic set standards for space action that are still followed today.

Not only did the film spawn toys, t-shirts, bed

spreads and a whole bunch of silver screen pretenders, but it also led to the creation of LucasArts software house. In turn this company has produced plenty of quality games, from *Sam and Max to The Secret Of Monkey Island*, but the best loved are probably the 'Star Wars' spin offs. *X-Wing* and *Tie Fighter* were flight simulations and the PlayStation has already seen the release of *Doom* clone *Dark Forces*. Now the arcade feeling *Rebel Assault 2* is set to be launched onto a market that seems incapable of being bored by the introduction 'Along time ago in a Galaxy far, far away...'



PILOTTING THE REBELS

By destroying the Death Star, the Rebel Forces proved themselves a serious threat to the Galactic Empire. Darth Vader enraged by his defeat, became obsessed with the elimination of the Alliance. Towards this end, his forces have scoured the Universe

for a new weapon, one that Darth Vader hopes can catch the Alliance off guard and give the Emperor undisputed rule of the Galaxy. That's the message that scrolls up the screen during the title sequence, but it looks like the Empire may have already discovered the new technology it needs to wipe out the Rebel threat.

In the vicinity of the Dreighton Nebula, Rookie One is out on a Rebel scouting patrol investigating disappearances of some of his organisations spacecraft. Legends of the region, known as the Dreighton Triangle, go back to a time when early hyper space travellers lost their bearings and vanished in the currents, eddies and storms of the nebula. During the Clone Wars, two opposing combat fleets fully engaged in battle were swallowed up in the deep space disturbances. The ghosts of those lost souls are said to still roam the nebula, attacking vessels foolish enough to wander into this weird corner of the Galaxy.

Rookie One responds to a garbled distress call coming from a ship close by. Once there he discovers an Imperial presence – which

Release : APRIL
Company : VIRHIN
Price : £44.95
Players : 1
Genre : SHOOT 'EM UP



STAGE COACH

Rebel Assault 2 is around 90% complete at this stage and although most of the work seems to have been completed, the version shown to *PlayStation Plus* only includes the first 10 levels. Here are the details of those stages.

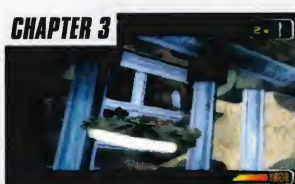
CHAPTER 1



THE DREIGHTON TRIANGLE.

Travelling through the sector in a B-wing, Rookie One encounters a few squadrons of Tie Fighters that must be destroyed.

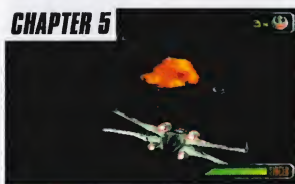
CHAPTER 3



MINING TUNNELS

Making his way to a Corellian Freighter (Millennium Falcon type ship) our hero must negotiate a series of tight tunnels.

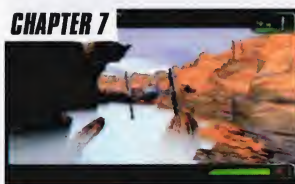
CHAPTER 5



INTERCEPTOR ATTACK

Out of the asteroid field and into a dog fight with Interceptors, which are more advanced than Ties.

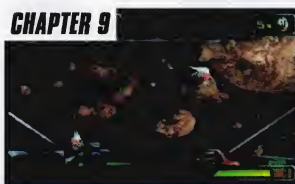
CHAPTER 7



TIE TRAINING

Guided by a tutor, this section puts Rookie One in control of enemy machinery, flying through a dangerous gorge.

CHAPTER 9



THE ASTEROID FIELD

There are chunks of spinning rock to avoid, although this time, unfortunately for you, they have gun turrets installed on their surfaces.

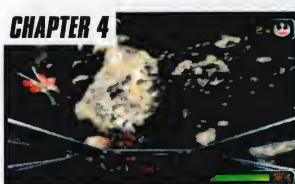
CHAPTER 2



THE CORELLIA STAR

After crash landing on the desolate surface you discover an Imperial base and must fight it out using a laser rifle.

CHAPTER 4



THE MINE FIELD

Somewhere within a mined asteroid belt lies an Imperial production facility. Step into an X-Wing and avoid the rocks.

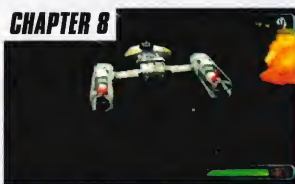
CHAPTER 6



THE MINING FACILITY

At the plant, obstacles require careful navigation while turrets try and take you out. Locate and destroy a central core.

CHAPTER 8



FLIGHT TO IMDAAR

Time to check out the abilities of a Y-Wing on route to Imdaar. Yet more Tie Fighters need to be blasted.

CHAPTER 10



SPEEDER BIKES

Everyone's favourite form of transport from *Return Of The Jedi*. Pilot a bike through a dense forest whilst shooting various creatures.

seems strange because the region is not thought to be of any strategic importance. It soon becomes apparent that the Empire is responsible for at least some of the more recent disappearances, but how? Since this game has already been released on other formats, and given the sub title of *The Hidden Empire*, it doesn't seem wrong to reveal the nature of the mystery. Somehow the Empire has discovered a cloaking device.

Space cadet, Rookie One, became a hero in *Rebel Assault*, which was released in 1993 and centred around destruction of the Death Star, utilising standard graphics. With *Rebel Assault 2* the concept was to combine sprites, live footage and John Williams' musical score from the 'Star Wars' trilogy, to produce an interactive movie. LucasArts' idea was that the only thing that could beat watching 'Star Wars' movies would be if you could take on a starring role. An arcade shoot 'em up with other genres mixed in, action is set across 15 levels that take recognisable features from the films to build a whole new story line.

MAD FOR IT

An enhanced version of LucasArts game engine called INSANE (Interactive Streaming Animation Engine) lies at the heart of *Rebel Assault 2*. The company says that these sets of code libraries allow clearer and more colourful images, and gameplay elements that can be seamlessly integrated with non interactive video and animated backgrounds. What this jargon actually means is that the graphics can be set within high resolution, photographic environments without looking patched together.

Play is split into Chapters and as these are completed in a strictly linear fashion, massive cut sequences reveal more and more of the plot. Although James Earl Jones hasn't been used as the voice from the black mask, Darth Vader makes several FMV appearances, as do R2 units, Imperial Commanders, Rebel Starfighters and dear old fish faced General Ackbar. Footage also includes shots of A-Wings, X-Wings, Ties,

Destroyers, Speeder Bikes; and basically all the kit that we drooled over when we were younger and still remember fondly.

FOLLOW THE LEADER

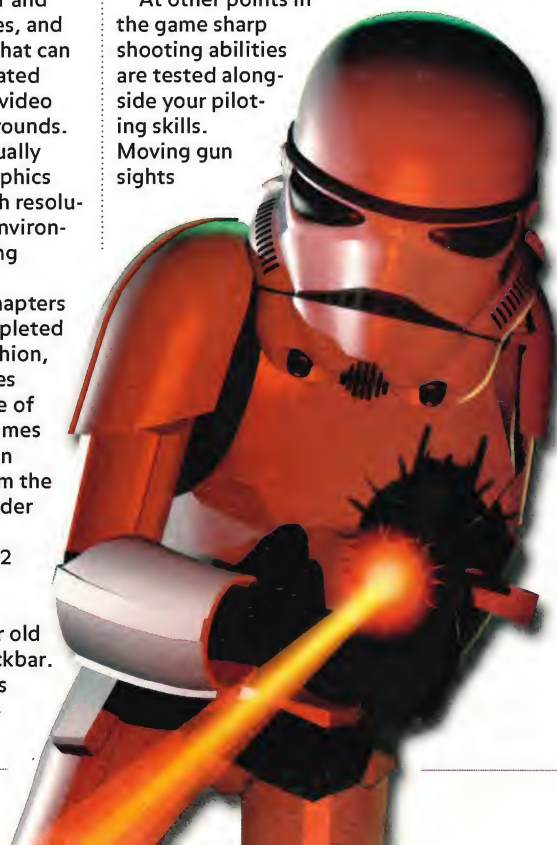
There are several different styles of play contained in *Rebel Assault 2*. Some of the sections require you to pilot various vehicles safely through obstacle courses. Sometimes a wingman or tutor will take the lead and pick out the routes while handing out tips and guidance. This looks pretty useful on tricky courses such as the



GRAPHICS ARE A MIXTURE BETWEEN SPRITES AND LIVE ACTION, WHICH ARE WOVEN TOGETHER USING A CODE TOOL DEVELOPED BY LUCASARTS CALLED INSANE.

dense forest path used with the Speeder Bikes or the tight valley of the Tie training installment where you essentially get to play follow the leader.

At other points in the game sharp shooting abilities are tested alongside your piloting skills. Moving gun sights



around the screen also makes a difference to your flight path so that everything can be controlled using just a few simple controls. In this way it is possible to manoeuvre an X-Wing in between asteroids and take out gun turrets or mines en route. Again, sometimes an experienced pilot will be at hand to help, sometimes you'll be completely on your own.

From the chapters available so far it appears that all serious dog fights are fought without any dangerous bits of scenery to edge around. Using an in cockpit view appears to allow only limited ship movement, but taking an out of craft view it is possible to try avoiding gunfire, with left/right spinning movements provided for on the shoulder buttons. To ensure that these sections have a fresh feel, each one makes use of a different vehicle and the player is pitted against a variety of enemies.

A third battle mode sees Rookie One taking on Stormtroopers on the ground in secret bases or on board Imperial destroyers. Here strategically placed equipment or the corner of a corridor provide cover from laser fire. In a similar fashion to *Time Crisis* it is possible to jump out from where you have been hiding, take out a few enemies then duck out of trouble once again. Later levels include Storm Troopers



that are mounted on hover vehicles who drive past and hurl explosive charges in your direction.

Cowardly taking cover doesn't work so these grenades need to be shot down before they reach your position.

The PlayStation version of *Rebel Assault 2* looks like being pretty similar to the PC or Mac versions of the game which have already been released, but there are a couple of differences. Unlike the Mac code which used a tiny little box in the middle of the monitor as a play screen, this console installment is full screen, even when cut sequences are used. Developers also say that the graphics and sound are better than the PC version, as they were able to make use of the 24bit colour and higher quality stereo effects and music.

Coming on two CDs, the amount of real video is staggering, and apparently this is the first new live 'Star Wars' footage shot since 'Return Of The Jedi', which will probably excite the hordes of anoraked fans. Not even the Special Edition of 'Stars Wars' that has just been released can boast new live film as extra scenes are built up from original shots that had previously been cut, or new sequences built on computers. Lavish attention to looks still needs to be complemented by



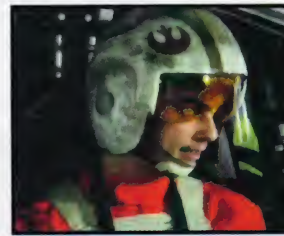
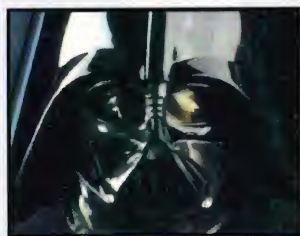
stronger game play. The problem with producing an interactive movie is that the game can feel out of the

player's control, LucasArts will have to be careful not to come up with another *Dragon's Lair* or *Space Ace*.



THE FULL MONTY

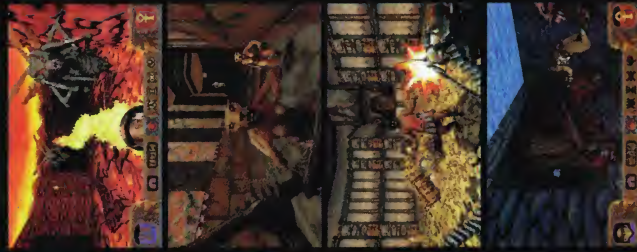
LucasArts have really gone to town on full motion video footage that provides a break between the action of the game and updates the plot. A full complement of actors and actresses, authentically dressed, have been mixed in with computer generated backgrounds of starships and alien environments. In PC and Mac versions of *Rebel Assault 2* it was possible to use cheats to access secret bits of out takes which could have appeared on *It'll Be Alright On The Night*, but whether or not these are included in the final PlayStation version is not yet certain at this stage.



AT CERTAIN POINTS IN REBEL ASSAULT 2, GAME HERO ROOKIE ONE DONS A STORMTROOPER OUTFIT TO INFILTRATE IMPERIAL STRONGHOLDS.

Exhumed

I AM THE WALKING DEAD
UNVEILED I HUNT THE
COME FORTH, BOW DOWN
I AM STRONG, I AM STRONG



94%
SEGA SATURN
MAGAZINE

93%
MEAN
MACHINES
SEGA

BMG
INTERACTIVE

PlayStation

PC

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REST IN PIECES

Tiger Shark

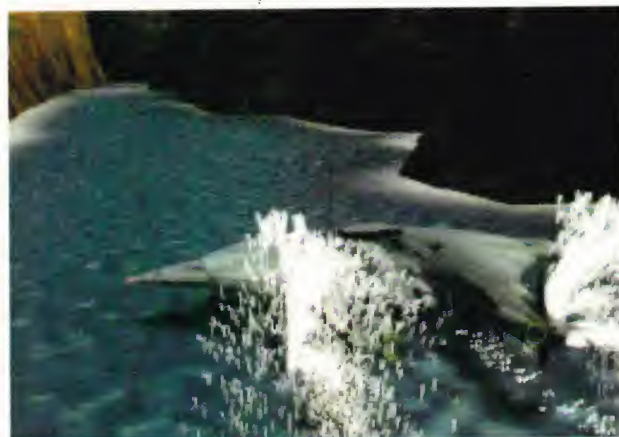
Life on the ocean wave eh?

But what about underneath it? This is the premise behind GT's new action game *Tiger Shark*, which holds the dubious honour of being the first 3D underwater shoot 'em up on the PlayStation. Set in the future, it's an arcade game which has you piloting a high speed attack sub – strangely enough called the Tiger Shark – on various missions for a CIA type group called Westpac Intelligence. These missions regularly involve the destruction or sabotage of geothermal taps, large power stations on and below the sea which draw energy from the earth's core. Japan was the first country to use the taps to solve their energy crisis and try and protect them from earthquakes. Unfortunately it had the opposite effect and the resulted in a fair chunk of Japan falling into the sea. The Russians, undeterred by this pretty damning evidence that taps are not the best way to get cheap electricity, have started using the technology themselves. It soon becomes clear that the Russians will not stop this practice and that it could lead to a global disaster, so it's up to you and your sub to cut the power.

YOUR DISPLAY GIVES YOU A GREAT DEAL OF INFORMATION, INCLUDING DEPTH, SPEED, A COMBINED SONAR AND RADAR DISPLAY AND A WEAPONS READ OUT. SO DON'T GO COMPLAINING YOU HAVEN'T GOT ENOUGH INFORMATION.



Release : MAY
Company : GT
Price : £44.99
Players : 1
Genre : SHOOT 'EM UP



DIVE DIVE DIVE
Your sub is a marvel of modern science, which it had better be since you'll need all the help you can get. Forget all that stuff about huge slow nuclear submarines because your craft moves like a dolphin with a rocket pack, both above and below the water. Yes, you can also take the action to the surface, and if you're going fast enough when you hit sea level then you'll leap out of the water looking very cool indeed. Weapons are selected automatically prior to the mission and come in two packages, one for when you're sub-

merged and obviously one for when you're not. On the surface the standard weapon is a double machine gun which has infinite ammo but tends to overheat if fired continuously. To back this up you also have missiles – guided and otherwise – which will take out targets with ease.



Under the water the machine gun is replaced with a laser which has the same limitations, and the missiles are substituted by torpedoes. Added to this armoury are ECM pods which act as decoys to missiles and torpedoes fired at you which, if fired in time should save you from a watery grave.

Now all these weapons would be pretty useless if you didn't have any enemies, but you do. Lots of them. There's a wide variety of, with different machines being used both above and below the water. When on the surface, you are confronted with giant speedboats armed with rocket launchers, and helicopter gunships who swoop down with their guns blazing. Compared to the battleships though, they're cannon fodder. These giants fire guided missiles and take a lot of punishment before finally going down. There are also land installations to destroy, since they often protect mission objectives. If the action gets too frantic up above you might be tempted to dive under the waves for cover, this won't offer you much





respite however because the waters are teeming with even more enemies. Small, highly manoeuvrable killer subs stalk you (with searchlights if it's a night mission), gun towers fire with unerring accuracy as you approach them, and nuclear submarines fire torpedo after torpedo in order to send you to Davy Jones' locker. And don't think you can escape one set of enemies by diving or surfacing to avoid them. Enemies can fire at you whether you are above or below the waves and so destroying all of them is necessary if you are to survive.

SONAR SO GOOD

The missions themselves have many objectives, and all must be fulfilled if you are to succeed. Some missions require you to complete the objectives in a precise order, but occasionally you will find yourself with the freedom to

choose your next task at will. They often involve the destruction or sabotage of geothermal taps or other installations, but



EXPLODING GIANT SPEEDBOATS, JAPANESE NUCLEAR SUBMARINES AND VOLCANIC ACTIVITY ON THE SEA BED ARE JUST SOME OF THE THINGS YOU'LL SEE IN YOUR LITTLE SUBMARINE.

often your missions are more complex than that. One in particular has you having to escort a Japanese submarine to some taps so that it can disable them. But when you begin the mission the sub is trapped in a minefield and you have to destroy the mines without hitting the sub before protecting it as it completes its tasks. These the objectives are made easy to reach thanks to your heads up display which not only tells you what your next task is but gives places an arrow on your radar/sonar display for you to follow. Another handy feature is the ability for you to send out a sonar 'ping' underwater which highlights all installations and vehicles in the vicinity with wireframe boxes which makes them a lot easier to spot in the murky depths, and shows how much damage they have sustained.

All of this is presented with extremely fast moving graphics, with shots and vehicles speeding about with great abandon, and some impressive effects are provided by the big ships. The huge submarines move majestically through the oceans, as do the battleships.



And when these take enough damage, watching them sink slowly to the bottom of the deep blue ocean or exploding with a massive shockwave is certainly something to behold. If GT can live up to all of these expectations then *Tiger Shark* looks to be a shoot 'em up which could make quite a name for itself, a lot more than being set in a different environment. This could be a 32bit version of *Stingray*, which is all we could hope for.

(RIGHT) THE INFAMOUS GEOTHERMAL TAPS.



(LEFT) DON'T WORRY ABOUT THIS HELICOPTER GETTING TOO CLOSE, HE'S ABOUT TO CRASH INTO THE SEA.



PERISCOPE, WHAT PERISCOPE?

It's almost standard practice now to have multiple views from which to observe the ongoing action during games and *Tiger Shark* is no exception. There are three viewpoints to choose from and all have their good and bad points.



THIRD PERSON PERSPECTIVE

This is probably the best view because it shows you a much wider view of the action and makes avoiding both the enemies and their weapons a lot easier. The only problem is, is that you can actually lose sight of your submarine as it moves between the surface and the water.



FIRST PERSON PERSPECTIVE

The first person view lets you sit in the cockpit and watch the action from inside the sub itself. This adds to the atmosphere of the game, particularly when objects are coming right at you. The drawback is that your peripheral vision is cut down in comparison to the third person perspective view.



DROP CAMERA

For that cinematic feel you can drop a camera behind you which will pan around following your every move. The drop camera is great for showing how manoeuvrable your sub is, but unfortunately is only a novelty viewpoint since it's impossible to target anything accurately.

TAKE CONTROL

OF THE GREATS OF THE ENGLISH PREMIERSHIP AND FIRST DIVISION IN

SOCCER '97

THE ALL NEW **ENHANCED VERSION** OF THE

CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED

OLYMPIC SOCCER!

SOCCER '97



THE COMPARISON...

FIFA SOCCER '97

Playstation Plus - "The sluggish pace pales terribly next to the fast-paced offerings of Olympic Soccer" - 64%

C&VG - "Overall worse than the previous games" - 2/5

Playstation Pro - "Very slow and incredibly unplayable" - 7/10

OLYMPIC SOCCER

Playstation Plus - "The greatest Playstation footie game to date" - 93%

C&VG - "The best Playstation football game" - 4/5

Playstation Pro - "You can keep your Power Soccer, your FIFAs and your Actua. Olympic Soccer is a more enjoyable game than any of them" - 9/10

THERE IS NO COMPARISON



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THE SIX TRACKS TAKE YOU RACING AROUND THE WORLD, FROM CANADA TO NEPAL WITH SOME MAJESTIC MOUNTAINS IN THE BACKGROUND, AND PLENTY OF ICE ON THE ROADS.

Need for Speed 2



racing games come in many different shapes and sizes, each offering loads of tracks and features and suchlike, but there's one genre which is often overlooked. You might have thrilled at driving Formula 1 racing cars, and done some high-speed hover racing in *Wipeout 2097*, but what can compare to getting behind the wheel of a Lotus or a Jaguar and not some made up fantasy car, and burning some serious rubber around the world. The origi-

nal *Need for Speed* valiantly tried to give us those thrills but sadly failed to set our imagination alight, although it did have a superb two-player mode. Now it's trying to win us over with a sequel, which is rather imaginatively titled *Need for Speed 2*. Boasting a vastly improved engine in terms of both graphics and overall speed as well as some new features, it looks like this time they might have got it right.



I FEEL THE NEED...

The driving engine in *Need for Speed 2* seems to have been inspired by the best bits of *Ridge Racer* and *Destruction Derby 2*, and even in this early version, the improvements are obvious. Crashing was always one of the most fun things about the first *Need for Speed*, and thankfully careering off the track has remained an action packed part of the game. Should your car have a colli-



sion it doesn't just grind to a halt. If it's travelling at a sufficiently high speed it will flip and roll end over end until it comes to a skidding halt. Even if you're not going at a speed that'll justify rolling your vehicle, a nasty skid will result in tyre tracks being left on the road and a cloud of smoke and dust rising from your hapless vehicle. And if you think that's bad, just wait until you hit another car, particularly one of the civilian 2CVs. Both vehicles invariably end up spinning off the road, with at least one stuck on its roof. This means that crashes aren't just incidents that you can shrug off, they are so realistic that even though your car can't be destroyed, it will cost you a great deal of time, and obviously could lose you the race, so drive carefully! Your cars can now drive off the road as well as



on it, which is not only an improvement, it's a necessity. Instead of smacking into an invisible barrier every time you leave the tarmac, you can now head up onto embankments and naturally, cut those corners. The designers of the game have realised that there are some unsporting souls who will try and cheat on hairpin corners by taking the off-road route and so have cunningly placed some treacherous drops near possible shortcuts to dissuade them, or at least make it difficult to do safely.

Release : APRIL
Company : EA
Price : £44.99
Players : 1-2
Genre : RACING

AS WELL AS THE INITIAL LINE UP OF VEHICLES, THERE WILL BE SOME SECRET CARS TO FIND AS YOU PROGRESS THROUGH THE GAME.

MEAN MACHINES

The real attraction of *Need for Speed 2* is of course the cars. There is a great selection of sporty beauties which are waiting for you to take on that worldwide drive. They are all as close to the real thing as possible, both in terms of graphics and performance, which should be enough to have any boy racer desperately wanting to get a go. And let's face it, it's probably the closest you're going to get to the real thing. The full line up has yet to be confirmed but here's a quick look at what you could be driving.



MCLAREN F1



FORD GT 90



FORD INDIGO



JAGUAR XJ220



LOTUS GT1



LOTUS ESPRIT V8



ITALDESIGN CAL



ISDERA COMMENDATORE 112i

Multiple views are of course a standard part of any racing game, but *Need for Speed 2*'s actually manage to offer something new. As well as your standard behind the car view, there is a low view from a camera which seems to have been stuck to the outside of a passenger door which gives you the impression of some real speed, even if it doesn't make for easy control of the car. But it's the view from inside the car that really shows the quality and work that has gone into the game, because instead of the usual 'this is what it looks like if you're sitting on the bonnet' view, there is a full dashboard for each of the cars, complete with steering wheel and working rearview mirror. This has been digitised from photographs of the real thing to give you the most realistic drivers eye view possible, and it's nice to see someone making some

real effort for a change instead of doing the same old thing time and time again.

MINT THAT SCHOOL-BUS!

So, the cars might be nice little movers but what of the tracks? There's six of them

better get practiced in changing lanes. Your rival racers have also increased in number, so it's now a 12 car race instead of eight. But if they're not enough of a challenge for you, there's a split screen mode for you to take on a friend in the two player



(RIGHT) CIVILIAN CARS CAN TAKE A PASTING JUST AS MUCH AS YOU CAN. WATCH THEM ROLL!



(LEFT) THE DIGITISED DASHBOARD MAKES THE INSIDE CAR VIEW A JOY TO PLAY.



which are set around the world and so offer a large variety of terrains and climates to travel through. As in the first game you're not racing on custom tracks, but on the open road, which means you will come across some rather different scenery as well as tearing up the roads in the towns and villages which you speed through. This also means that not all the traffic will be involved in the race itself, as there are a number of civilian cars cluttering the roads to make life even more difficult. 2CVs, Volkswagen Beetles and even a school bus are out there as well as many others, so you'd

mode. This was the strongest feature is the original and there's no reason why it shouldn't be even better now that everything else has been improved. And the fact that it doesn't require a link-up will make for some instant action without the need for cluttering cables. Even with all these extras it still seems



that EA have managed to fit even more into the game. There are reports that the final version will have secret routes, tracks and even extra cars which can be accessed by the expert driver, which should give you another reason to play through the tracks once you think you've seen everything.

With all these new features *Need for Speed 2* certainly looks like it has improved greatly from the first instalment, but we'll have to see how it turns out when we get a full version. We'll be bringing you the full review next month to check whether it comes up with the goods this time around.



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THE SMALL
IN-GAME
SPRITES ARE
SUPPLEMENTED
BY PSYGNOSIS'
TYPICALLY
POLISHED
FRONT-END
SCREENS



When over head racing games first hit arcade screens their simple vertically scrolling courses allowed driving at an exceptionally fast rate when you consider the kind of lumbering technology that was available at the time. Games like *Spy Hunter* traded on very simple graphics and basic gameplay but still managed to cause white knuckles as you gripped the wheel. Although accurate conversions of such titles probably wouldn't hold the imagination for too long these days, there's no reason why such a fondly remembered genre shouldn't be given a make-over for today's market. Enter Nottingham based programming team Clockwork Games who intend to revive the top down racing format. Responsible for making *Lemmings 3D*, they've now come up with a split screen trip down memory lane called *Speedster*.



POCK WORK

This is an age of realistic environments and no modern reworking of an old theme would be complete without 3D graphics. Where as many

Speedster

early polygon racing games were actually built in 2D and converted into a third dimension later on, with *Speedster* the idea was to build courses in true 3D right from the beginning. Modelled on Silicon Graphics workstations roads bank, rise and fall at various angles and include bumps and jumps to propel cars skywards. Some of the courses also have sections of track that cross over themselves on bridges whilst others include off road short cuts across fields.

Viewed from above it is possible to set the game camera within a range from fairly low behind the vehicles to high above them looking directly down upon play. Taking this approach meant that courses had to look realistic from any angle, so *Speedster* isn't able to make use of programming tricks that would have meant less work for the Clockwork Games team. Trees for example couldn't be made out of a texture mapped onto a single polygon because if the view point was set above it, the object would just simply disappear.

PICK A CAR

Two classes of vehicle are available in *Speedster* and in each category eight different models, with their own strengths and weaknesses,



can be raced. The high performance series include stock cars, hot hatch backs, tourers, saloons and Italian sports machines. Those in the heavy metal class are based on working vehicles not usually associated with racing such as trucks, pick ups, 4x4s, buggies and jeeps. A realistic physics based driving model was employed to tailor how each vehicle handles and feels, right down to tyre pressures that affect how a machine drives.

Special tools developed in house have allowed a great degree of control over the lighting effects on each level. A single source can be set for the sun's position which can then be adjusted for intensi-

ty and ambient background lighting can also be specified. In game the cars are real time light sourced according to the position of the sun and even their wheels are affected as they turn. In courses set at night, street lamps and other artificial sources throw light onto passing vehicles and cause shadows.

FULLY COMPREHENSIVE

Bearing in mind the frantic nature of driving in over head racers, careful attention has gone into working out crashes, which are mathematically calculated according to the direction and force of collisions. It should therefore be possible to clip the rear of another vehicle and watch in satisfaction as it spins out of control off the road. Full interaction was felt to be important, so adopting a reckless style of racing will mean that computer controlled contestants will start to drive more aggressively using blocking and ramming tactics. If on the other hand the player decides to keep



Release : APRIL
Company : PSYGNOSIS
Price : £44.95
Players : 1-2
Genre : RACING

EACH CAR EXISTS AS A FULLY RENDERED 3D MODEL, THUS ALLOWING THE PLAYER TO ZOOM IN AND OUT OF THE ACTION AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE VIEWS ON OFFER.



out of the way of battles, they get to watch the game AI in action as computer players try to take each other out of the competition. Each driver has been endowed with individual AI characteristics so the dune buggy, which is fast and lightweight, will do its best to keep clear of the heavy duty truck cab.

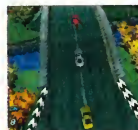
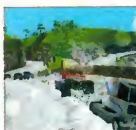
Various championships can be raced with or without the need to reach timed check points. Making it through a course also depends on careful driving as each machine can only take so many knocks and scrapes, every crash will reduce a damage indicator and affect the handling, when the bar hits rock bottom the car will blow up in a puff of black smoke and the race comes to a premature end.

DOUBLE JEOPARDY

A big part of *Speedster*'s success will no doubt depend on how well the game runs with two people competing against each other. When the project first got off the ground a year ago it was thought that certain compromises might have to be made in split screen mode. As the PlayStation would have to cope with rendering twice the amount of data, the level of graphical detail or frame rate might have suffered.

However, Clockwork Games say they have managed to create an exact replica of the one player game in split screen mode. Friends, or even enemies for that matter, will be able to set race distances according to taste and a handicap option allows inexperienced players to start ahead of the pros.

Eleven programmers and artists concentrated on the look and feel of the product while all audio work was handled out of house. Over a three month period, 15 original tracks were laid down in the studio and titles like Mesh and Wired Soul include live guitar parts. With a brief of mixing the best elements of current techno, jungle and rock, sound tracks are a blend of styles from White Zombie to The Chemical Brothers, with a touch of ZZ



Top occasionally sneaking in. Members of the Psygnosis audio department, who have already worked on the *Formula 1* sound track, were involved in the process, so expect the 47 minutes of tunes to be solid and charged with energy.

Speedster is getting very near to completion and even at this stage it's looking pretty fast and polished, although we will have to wait another month for the final code before we know whether or not the game-play, challenge and long term appeal match the superb quality of the graphics.

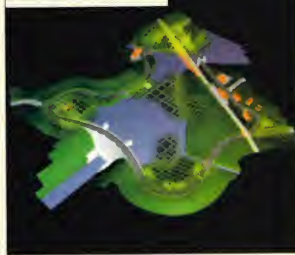
RACEWAYS

Eight tracks are accessible at the beginning of *Speedster*, with a bonus course and the ability to race in the opposite direction available on completion of goals. Developers say that the player's abilities should be broken in easily at first with plenty of long straights and gentle corners, building up to different road surfaces which affect handling; jumps, which if taken wrongly will throw vehicles into obstacles; and roads that split and have more extreme bends. At this stage the ninth course is a bit of a secret, but here are details of the others.

ATLANTIC TRAIL



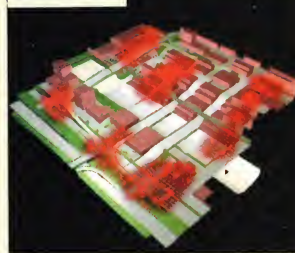
COUNTRY VALLEY



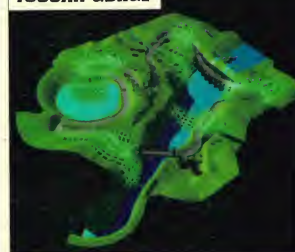
YOKON PASS



DOWNTOWN



TUSCAN GORGE



CWG RACEWAY



PACIFIC DREAM



GOLDEN SANDS



THE FIGHT IS ONLY HALF THE BATTLE



So it's time to think on your feet. When you've got five opponents on your tail at the same time, you've got to move at the speed of thought to survive. That's when it sinks in. There are five worlds ahead of you, fifteen hundred locations between them, full of hostile alien warriors hellbent on your destruction.

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mother said
about running
with sharp
objects



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Solved

There are great games and then there are GREAT games. *Command and Conquer* falls into the latter category, and here at PlayStation Plus we feel you can never have too much information. Detailed strategies, unit information, tried and tested moves and – of course – cheap tricks. Part 2 is to follow next month...

Command & Conquer

IT'S THE HELLS ANGELS!



Though Recon Bikes are often overlooked or seen as a cheap terrain uncovering device, it shouldn't be overlooked that in groups they can be quite devastating. Rush into an enemy base with fifteen bikes and you'll be surprised (as will the computer!) how many buildings you can take down before they all die. It's also worth building a second fleet of bikers while all this is going on to follow the initial attack, as there'll be tons of weak units and buildings to mop up. It's also damn satisfying to watch fifteen bikers decimate a harvester or an Orca patrol, and even the likes of Mammoth tanks can be shredded in no time at all.

NEVER MIND THE SILOS...

When your refinery starts to get full of lovely tiberium (or you keep getting "silos needed" messages) start building yourself another structure. The construction will use up the tiberium that's in storage, but when the structure is finished, simply cancel the building altogether. You'll get your money back, but the tiberium itself will have disappeared, never to return.



BURN VICAR, BURN!

Always take the time to burn down churches. Apart from being incredibly good fun on a purely moral level, you also stand a pretty good chance of finding loads of crates full of money underneath them.



WAVING IN THE AIR

Although it generally pays off to build up a huge force and then just steam in through the enemy base's front gates, it's often worth attacking in waves. Not only does this avoid the inefficiency caused by tons of troops and tanks all trying to climb around each other, but it allows you to roll in first with the big boys, and then move in with a more strategic attack once all the killer forces have been subdued. Try going bonkers and building yourself six choppers and then grouping them into two lots of three. Find yourself

a nice juicy target to attack and send in 'Team Square'. It might take them a while to get there (and now's a good time to soften the opposition up a bit with a few expendable tanks) but wait for the choppers to arrive, and the moment they appear call in the 'Team Triangle'. Because of the delay between each team's attack – and their subsequent reloading runs – the idea is that you will always have one group attacking while the other team are preparing for the next hit. Nothing less than constant harassment!

MAMMOTH PROTECTION



Though it's important to have a monster offensive force, more important is the preservation of your base. When you get to the point where you can build Mammoth tanks, don't commit them to the attack force, but spread them throughout your base. This way you can get a quicker, more effective crossfire scenario on the go should the CPU be mad enough to attack. It's also worth splashing out on a second War Factory, just to speed up production times for your larger vehicles.

FRONT DOOR DENIAL



NOD: If the terrain makes it possible, block and build around your base to leave the computer only one way in. You can then place Obelisks to the sides of the entrance (to deal with vehicles) and flame tanks as a "door" (eh voila! Infantry flambe). It's a very power-hungry method, but four Obelisks can take out a mammoth in one strike, so make sure you supply the juice.

PROTECT THE IMPORTANT



You can have a million troops and tons of tanks, but if you lose a building like the construction yard or war factory, you can go from near victory to near death in an instant. If you're building in a large area, snake a trail of sandbags off away from the main construction yard and build the main hug of your base there. Meanwhile, back around your construction yard you should build all the important buildings (radar installations, missile silos, power, temples, etc.) and surround them with concrete, turrets and SAM sites. You can now get on with the other things without having to constantly worry about unseen forces sneaking in and crippling your efforts.

CANCEROUS GROWTH

As mentioned above, there's a pretty effective way to ensure that any enemy buildings you take over don't get instantly walloped or taken back, and that's to start building an Obelisk before you send in that famous engineer/APC combination. The moment you capture a building, bung yourself down the Obelisk right in the middle of the CPU's base! This should keep the enemy gits busy and buy you enough time to create more Obelisks/turrets to destroy the base from the inside out. Once you feel secure, the next most important task is to build or capture a barracks and start pouring out engineers to claim the remaining buildings (they produce faster than the defences can). And there you are, your very own cancer. Once it's started it can't be stopped.

DAMN GOOD HIDING

NOD: Another excellent stealth tactic is to sneak a few cloaked tanks into the CPU's base and then leave them by major constructions. If you then want to take out buildings with Ion Cannons or Nukes, you can use these 'goal hangers' to finish off the damaged buildings before they get repaired.

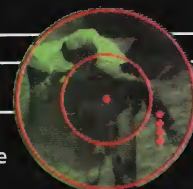
OUR HOUSE...



When you start a mission with a remote construction yard, don't locate it quickly just so you can get building. Take the time to search for locations with easy access to tiberium fields or, even better, a location that only has a few narrow approaches. And don't forget, you can always build across plateaus via sandbag 'spider' links.

ROAD RAGE

GDI: Never underestimate the antipersonnel use of the APC. Apart from being fast (allowing you to run away should things get hairy!) it can take out 5 tightly grouped troops, and if the troops start squirming around, you can just fire at them (at which point they'll all hit the deck) and then squash 'em.



DISPOSABLE HEROES

Basically the aim here is to build a convincing attack force on the understanding that you don't really care what happens to them. A decent clump of mini gunners, a hum-vee (or nod bike) and maybe a tank or two should keep the enemy forces occupied for a while, so group them together and then hold them in reserve. Now build an APC and load it up with 4 engineers and a bazooka soldier, and move it to the side of the map that the enemy construction yard's on. It's now that you should bring in the decoy force from the *opposite* of where the Construction Yard is. Remembering that you really shouldn't

care how your attacking force goes, sit back for a moment until you can clearly see the CPU's base defences getting stuck in and bringing all of its troops and units across for the big fight. Now's the time to bring the APC into the (hopefully now pretty well deserted) corner of the base that's full of lovely undefended buildings and get taking over! Now is also a good time to employ the 'have a turret ready-made' tactic and drop some of your own defences around the recently stolen buildings. This should help take care of any forces that leave the decoy battle to take out your buildings.



GDI ATTACKTICS



1) If you put Mammoth Tanks up against turrets, it's got to be a committed attack (ie once you're in, there's no turning back). The reason for this is that, because of the time it takes these slow-moving tanks to turn around and lumber off out of range, they'll have taken as much damage as if they'd just held their ground and attacked.

2) If you want to overwhelm an Obelisk with foot soldiers, you'll need to send about ten infantry, and be prepared to lose about half this force.

3) If you're steaming into an enemy base filled with turret defences and protecting tanks, don't waste Orcas or infantry on the tanks – just get them stuck into the turrets and leave the armoured enemies to your own tanks division.

4) Into the lion's mouth... if you want to take out SAM sites with Orcas, don't send less than six unless you want to lose units.

5) Never send armour up against Obelisks unless you've already cut the power supply, or you'll take incredibly one-sided losses. Better is to blast your way through walls – avoiding Obelisks – and make a determined effort to take out the power. If you're successful, move quickly to take down as many Obelisks as possible.

HARVEST FESTIVAL

Though attacking enemy harvesters a long way from home is usually a good way to bring out a million foot soldiers, later in the game (when both you and the CPU are trying to get those last dregs of tiberium) destroying harvesters is a blinding way to get him wasting his last resources replacing them.

ENGINEERS TO ORDER

Similar to pre-building defences before taking over buildings, start creating an engineer before tacking a barracks and then put him on hold just before he's ready. You can now take the building, make it your primary barracks and quickly resume the engineer's progress. Voila! an almost instant engineer ready to steal nearby enemy buildings.

FUN WITH FENCES

If you want to protect essential buildings but can't be bothered to build the sandbags links detailed elsewhere, simply put a chain link fence around individual structures or groups of building that don't require access to operate (radars, silos, communication centres, etc). This effectively stops enemy engineers from taking over buildings, and blocks any Commando's attempts to bomb your buildings. Of course they can shoot through your fence, but at least you'll have a bit more time to react that you would have done otherwise. Perhaps you should build a spiral fence to offer multiple layers of protection.

NOD ATTACKTICS

1) You don't have to instantly make use of units you build. Stealth tanks are great on the offensive, but even better is to start stashing stealth tanks in an enemy base before an attack, then you can attack from inside the base just after your frontal assault begins.

2) Don't forget about those Hells Angels! Fast units like Recon Bike gangs can be devastating against harvesters. Hit 'em hard and then get the hell out!

3) Never group flame troopers. Spread them out to reduce friendly fire damage.

FOOLING AIRSTRIKES

For some reason Air Strikes love a northerly target. Gather some unhealthy troops together and spread them out to the north of your base. Nine times out of ten the artificial intelligence will hit here first.



CHASE ME

It's always good to use fast Recon vehicles to taunt and lure enemy units back to your base (where a gaggle of turrets can dish out some death) but a similar technique can be used to lure infantry across patches of tiberium... with hilarious consequences.

DEMOLITION MAN



When planting demolition charges in the guise of Commando, let the computer move you to a safe range automatically. It might look as though you sometimes take damage, but this is actually from soldiers who evacuate the building and not from the explosion itself. Just be ready with that cross-hair over the exploding structure. "I'm on it!"



DEALING WITH...

**NOD FLAME-THROWERS**

Everyone has to learn the hard way, but for Satan's sake *don't* stand flame troops in with standard squads. Considering they don't seem too worried about

who gets in the way of their fire, they're best used alone and well spaced out. They prove ideal for eliminating enemy infantry units, especially squads packed up together, so simply send out two or three flame-throwers and organise them to attack from different sides so as not to hit each other. They can take out up to sixteen (!) completely healthy opponents in one shot and at a ridiculous range (much further in fact than the flame appears to extend).

**FLAMERS VS MINI GUNNERS**

There's always the risk of heavy losses when sending infantry against flame troops,

but try using waves of mini gunners, grouped in twos and threes, and coming in from different directions. You can also be successful just sending gunners in one at a time, but the casualties will ultimately be worse... Flame-throwers can also seriously damage lone tanks in the field, so attack the tank and keep moving to avoid being blended in with the grass.

SUICIDAL SIZZLINGS

If in doubt, run into the middle of attacking flamers or grenadiers with your own flame trooper as, considering they literally explode on death, you'll at least take a few with you!

**FIRE ROCKETS**

Flame troops and bazooka men make a rather good combination as the rockets take care of the

vehicles, while the flamers can toast the closer targets. It's also worth noting that, if you are fortunate enough, one flame-thrower which is firing at a building can cause it to burst into flames; instantly cutting its life in half.

**BURNING BUSHES**

Watch out for flamers firing around trees as, if one ignites, you can wave goodbye to any units within a single-person radius of it.

CROP ROTATION

When attacking vehicles with infantry you either need to finish them off quickly with the scatter movements to avoid being squashed. However, take the time to spread your men out around the target in a big circle before attacking and you will find that the AI gets a bit upset and starts spinning the target around. Do this to a harvester and you'll reduce it to dust without having to keep shuffling about the place. Oh, and don't forget to have some spare infantry to take out the enemy protectors that are bound to appear the moment to even vaguely touch the harvester!

READY AND WAITING

When your resources are starting to run low, don't let the stronger, better equipped enemy gradually whittle you away; make him come to you. Set up your remaining forces in the most devastating formation possible and then (because you can't move locked in this formation; we'll just have to wait for *Red Alert* for that feature) send something fast like an APC to lure tanks back to your 'killing zone' — the perfect ambush tactic. Be intelligent when setting your formation, though. Have mini gunners up front (because of their short range) with grenadiers behind to supplement their fire power. Behind these, line up three or four bazooka guys who will then be in the perfect position to take out the vehicles. Once the tanks gets into the zone and the oncoming enemy infantry have been mostly eliminated, surround the tanks with your grenadiers and dish out some death. Despite the simplicity of the move, this is surprisingly satisfying.



"SELL YOUR GRANNY AND PLAY
TOBAL NO 1 TILL YOUR FINGERS BLEED."

Play 94%

**TOBAL
NO.1**

"The quest mode is a superb addition to the game,
and makes for some late nights as it's really tough to complete"

Mean Machines PlayStation



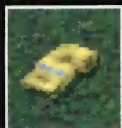
DO NOT
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THE POWER
OF PLAYSTATION

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DEALING WITH...



HUMM-VEES

People tend to get to a point where they're just constantly saving up and churning out the heaviest tanks they can. However, the Humm-Vees are fast, very manoeuvrable, and make for a good interceptor if you need to deal with a surprise attack. It's also extremely good at dealing with scattered infantry units thanks to its superior machine gun range (although this, fairly obviously, doesn't apply against rocket infantry!) To do this effectively you need to keep adjusting your position to keep out of range and, should you find yourself diving headfirst into a sticky situation, don't attempt to turn around as you'll take tons of damage during the manoeuvre. Instead, keep going in your original direction and then turn once you're safely out of range. Don't worry... you'll be fast enough to get out of trouble. Also: If you're sending in a Mammoth tank, back it up with at least one Humm-Vee to mop up infantry.

HURTING HUMMERS

When faced with Humm-Vees yourself, you can get stuck in with infantry thanks to their lack of squashing capabilities. A squad of rocket infantry with a couple of supporting mini gunners works well, but don't use assault cycles in anything less than a group of four or more.



HUMMING ENGINEERS

If you feel you might be able to sneak some engineers into a base but don't have the fire power for a full-on assault, try sending in a couple of Humm-Vees before the APC (crammed full of engineers, obviously). The hummers will attract all the heavy fire from tanks, artillery and obelisks, and though you'll probably lose them, their death will provide cover for your engineers (just get the power plants to disable those bloody obelisk towers!)

ROLLING THUNDER

As we all know, slow tanks can waste a lot of time trying to squash infantry on the way to a base attack, and since turning up for the full frontal with everyone on half strength is hardly a good idea, it's worth setting a squad of Humm-Vees to guard (shield icon) the tanks as 1) they won't steam off at full speed, they'll just stay with the tanks, and 2) they'll rush to gun down infantry while the tanks remain on-course for the ultimate target. Humm-Vees are also preferable to infantry in this situation as you can move the entire fleet over tiberium without damage. Incidentally, it seems as though six Humm-Vees attacking one unit of infantry will ensure instant death - even if they're laying on the ground.



APC MAPPING



Don't forget that, among its many uses, the APC is the third fastest land unit and has the largest Recon radius in the game (four squares all around) Fairly obviously, this makes it an excellent unit to use to clear the map of darkness at the start of a mission.

EVERYBODY OUT!



It's worth remembering that units will exit an APC in the reverse order of entry. It's therefore important that fragile units (like engineers) go in first and come out last, while your covering force (commandos, grenadiers, whatever) are the last in and first out.

DEALING WITH...



GDI MAMMOTH TANKS

The Mammoth tank is a beauty. It can take tons of punishment, deal out heavy blows to ground and air - using both its dual cannons and Mammoth Tusk missiles - AND will self-repair back to 50% strength after a battle. You also have the ability to drive over walls, but the price you are paying is speed and agility, so don't expect to deploy your forces quickly. Avoid getting your Mammoths involved in guerrilla warfare. Instead use them for heavy, direct assaults through opponents' front doors, with grenadiers and bazooka troops following close behind to deal with

infantry and stray vehicles. Also: make sure that you get them out to safety before they blow so you can make the most of their healing powers and longevity.

COUNTER MEASURES

Sad but true, there's only really one effective against the mammoth, and that's the Obelisk of Light. If you encounter a mammoth in the field, try to lure it back to your (hopefully well-defended) base.



Two or three hits from an obelisk should do the trick, and repairing a tower will certainly prove cheaper than replacing all the units you'll use if you take on the mammoth face-to-face. The only other effective solution is to surround the mammoth with cloaked tanks, attack with a standard vehicle and then decloak and get stuck in.

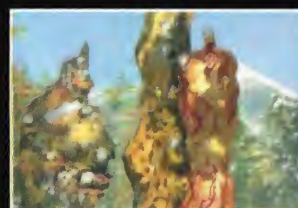
having a gaggle of bazooka troops nearby will also help whittle the git away.

LITTLE MEN

Awesome though the mammoth is, a team of infantry can take one down, but need to keep moving to avoid being run over. This shouldn't prove too tricky thanks to the killer's slow speed, but that's exactly why you'll probably find the CPU backing up his mammoth with tons of other units.

VERY LITTLE MEN

Of course you knew there'd be a counter to the infantry attack (apart from surrounding mammoths with other units) so... command the mammoth to attack the infantry opposite to the direction the tank is facing. This will trigger it to fire its missiles and should massacre a good number of the surrounding infantry.



SUCCUMB TO YOUR DARKER SIDE

9/10 PLAYSTATION PRO MARCH '97

4/5 C&VG MARCH '97

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"It's more haunting than Resident Evil and more violently graphic than Doom."

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DATE

Micro Machines V3



Release : APRIL
Company : CODEMASTERS
Price : £44.95
Players : 1-8
Genre : RACING



ver since Pacman got a sex change and tied a ribbon in his hair, sequels to video games have tended to quickly come and go in various forms. Some new versions of code have made some dramatic improvements, other releases have turned out to be tired rehashes that should never have seen the light of day. When presented with the opportunity to work on another instalment of a product, the temptation for development teams must surely be to make minor adjustments to the original code more in a bid to cash in on established titles than to substantially add anything to the overall gameplay. Take *Ridge Racer Revolution* for instance, which was hardly a giant leap forward in any respect and a total waste of money if you already had the first version.

Micro Machines may not have appeared on a 32bit machine before, but that fact doesn't negate the possibility that Codemasters might have decided to sit on their laurels and content themselves with a new lick of paint for their successful license. This would have been a forgivable attitude considering that the two previous versions were universally agreed to be great fun, but the company has always displayed a thoughtful approach to the production of games and brains behind the project saw the possibilities offered by the PlayStation's next generation hardware. Armed with a whole new vision for a 3D over head racer, programmers commendably set out to produce the definitive multi player game.

A GAME OF CHANCE

Released on the Nintendo Entertainment System seven years ago, *Micro Machines* actually came about by chance, beginning life as an idea for some Game Genie coding provisionally called *California Buggy Boys*. The company that marketed that piece of hardware in America also produced the popular miniature toys and so quite by chance the concept evolved into a *Micro Machines* game and a star was born. Had Codemaster's Andrew Graham, who is credited with creating the trilogy, been working for a different company when he came

up with the idea of a beach racer, the world might never have known the joy of bombing around a breakfast table in a tiny formula one car!

For those who haven't played the game before, and with 750,000 copies sold to date there can't be that many, the basic premise of all versions of *Micro Machines* is to race miniature vehicles around courses that are set across familiar everyday surroundings. Rounds are viewed from above and steering the toys is similar to using a remote. Playing against computer adversaries a simple ranking system is employed, but when competing against friends a slightly more complicated set of rules comes into play. Once one of the drivers gets a screens length away from the rest, an icon is lit up in that player's colour and when any person fills eight of these, they win.



If no one succeeds in lighting up eight indicators, then the player with most points after three laps is victorious.

Although you might think it would be easy for the computer to work out which player was in the lead, this calculation often seems random in multi player mode. A driver that sticks rigidly to the make shift roads will sometimes find that they can be beaten by others who rush off in any direction just to build up a screens lead. Strangely enough this apparent fault isn't all that off putting and gives the same



kind of feeling as having a poor referee preside over a top football match; ie frustrating at times, but at the end of the day well worth the ticket price.

Straying too far from the mapped out route, falling fowl of hazards, dropping

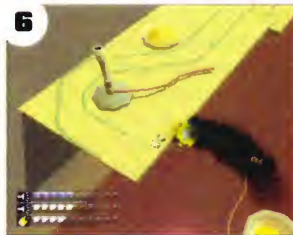
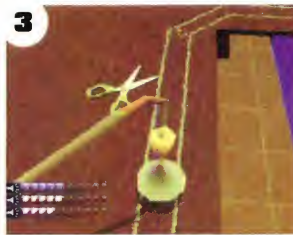
EVERYDAY OBJECTS FROM THE HOME, CLASSROOM, RESTAURANT AND SCIENCE LAB ARE USED TO BUILD THE COURSES IN MICRO MACHINES. ALL LOOK WONDERFULLY SOLID AND REALISTIC.

from heights can all cause destruction of vehicles and if the pack of competitors shoot off before the player has had time to rematerialise, then they must sit out the race until someone else lights up an indicator. Sneaky short cuts are included on most sections and can make all the difference to positions, but these are rather difficult to find without chocking up loads of losses.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

Similarities in rules aside, putting together a new instalment of *Micro Machines* on a next generation machine meant that the Codemaster's team had plenty of opportunities for radical change. Given the PlayStation's abilities to handle polygon based graphics, its perhaps not all that surprising that the programmers decided to devel-

THESE SHOTS SHOW ONE OF THE MANY SEQUENCES THAT TELEPORT DRIVERS BETWEEN IMPASSABLE AREAS OF THE TRACKS. IN THIS EXAMPLE FORMULA ONE CARS ARE SUCKED INTO A CHEMISTRY SET, TRAVEL ALONG TUBING AND THEN POP OUT THE OTHER SIDE AS BALLS OF FIRE.



op a full 3D environment for racing. When the Sony PlayStation was first launched, it wasn't exactly clear how effectively it could deal with building realistic worlds, but what soon became apparent was that this game would be a test of both matching programming abilities and concepts to the power of the hardware.

Developing *Micro Machines* into a 3D racer could have turned out to be little more than a gimmick or an exercise in following currently popular trends, but from the moment you start racing across the new tracks you get the feeling that this game was always meant to be set in

this kind of textured and light sourced environment. All in all there are some 48 individual circuits to test out, which are built around seven different settings: on the breakfast table, out in the garden (which includes a pond); down at the beach; in a games room; across a laboratory; at school and at a fancy restaurant.

Courses in each of these areas are marked out by objects that are appropriate to the location. For example, at the beach shells and pebbles are used at the beach with an ice lolly stick to mark the finish line, while on the table of the restaurant the course is mapped out using peas and carrots. One thing common to all the locations is the very solid three dimensional feel that has been achieved. Racing surfaces set high up feel precarious and negotiating narrow bridges made from rulers or French sticks is rather nerve racking. From down on the ground objects tower over head giving a real sense of playing with a tiny car. Design of the tracks is nothing short of genius and anyone who can still remember making up similar tracks for their toy cars when they were kids will instantly be taken back to their childhood.



JAM PACKED

There are hundreds of obstacles that litter the levels and crashing into these can make all the difference to a race. Fighting your way around tracks you come across boxes of breakfast cereals, amusingly titled books, bottles of

dart across the pond. Occasionally courses include devices such as chemistry kits, microscopes and teleport pods that warp contestants from one section to another and while these are graphically impressive the inevitable break in a closely fought battle is rather annoying. However, whether playing against computer characters or friends, *Micro Machines* is generally characterised by really frantic gameplay which is a result of excellent planning and well stocked environments.

This will probably sound like an odd point to make at first, but a special mention needs to be made about the floors used on each of the levels. The carpet that has been laid in the pool room looks like it come straight from a working man's club, the one in the restaurant must be used by virtually every Curry house in the



wine, felt tipped pens, calculators and sand castles, all of which are fantastically detailed with convincing texture mapped surfaces. Some areas feature animals that have been animated, such as a Dalmatian that breathes as it sleeps, a huge toad that puffs out its chest when it croaks, or dragon flies that

country and the lino classroom tiles are so accurate that you almost feel that you might at any moment catch nits from the kid sat next to you. Outside in the garden, concrete slabs make up patio paths and the surface of the pond reflects clouds and a bright blue sky during the day and stars at night. The

SMALL PACKAGES

For the first time in Micro Machine history, an arsenal of weaponry has been included. Where as before dirty tricks were confined to one driver trying to knock another out of the way, players can now pick up various items of destruction. This feature of the game works so well, it's difficult to see why they haven't been included before, but then that's the beauty of hindsight. Although extras such as speed and invisibility are also available, here's the list of destructive power ups that have been hidden in little gift wrapped packages and dotted around the circuits.



MISSILES

These shoot the length of the screen but are not guided, so hitting an opponent is tricky.



DYNAMITE

Little sticks of TNT that can only be hurled a short distance but have a large blast area.



BURNING WHEELS

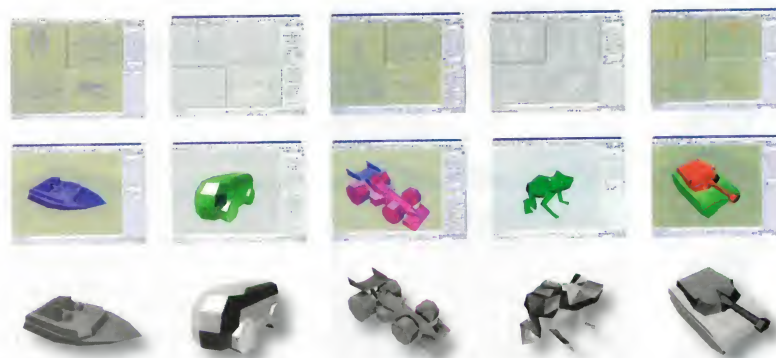
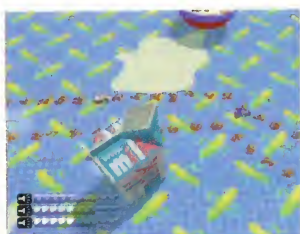
Tyres leave a trail of burning rubber and nudging into opponents causes them to blow up.

point is that the development team have really thought about making every little detail as close to real life as possible. This kind of attitude is undoubtedly why Codemaster's product stands out as such an exceptional game. 32 machines are on



offer in the game, each carefully designed in two stages – one model made from 40 polygons that is used for most of the racing and another made from 200 polygons which is used for close up shots. An experienced car designer was brought onto the project to give the vehicles a realistic touch, even if the toys are less than an inch

in length. Army vehicles such as APCs, tanks and jeeps are all on offer alongside sports cars, both vintage and modern, formula one racers, speed boats, monster trucks, camper vans and even an ice cream van that has a sign on its rear warning of children crossing and plays a horribly authentic jangly tune. As well as looking stylish (rather than just plain cute), each manoeuvres in a way you'd imagine the real thing to, although let's be honest, how many of us have ever had the chance to find out the true handling characteristics of a hot rod, dumper truck or rally car? Out and out racers stick to the track like glue and have dangerously fast acceleration, caterpillar tracked vehicles alter direction quickly, trucks sway as they corner, beach buggies bounce all over the place. Obstacles also have an impact on the way vehicles are controlled, so when a car hits a milk spillage it will



UNDER CONSTRUCTION

To create the various courses, programmers mapped out layers of separate graphic sheets to give height to the play areas. Cars and objects were created in 3D Studio using polygons before textures were added over the top. The final stage of the design process was to add light sourcing. When you consider that there are hundreds of different objects, 48 circuits and 32 vehicles (which all had to be designed twice) it's hardly surprising that *Micro Machines V3* has taken a team of 20 two years to complete.

aqua plane and drift, or when it drives over honey, or past a magnet it will get stuck to the spot.

As is the case with all racing games, speed is a crucial make or break element. When Andrew Graham first started to write the main engine code his overriding concern was that all action should take place within a frame, ensuring that graphics would run quickly without any blurring. This goal has been achieved in the PlayStation version, although not on other formats, and the



sense of speed as the camera tracks the vehicles is frightening. Only when four or more players start making use of pick ups does the movement become slightly jerky and this actually takes little away from the playability of the game.

BRING ON THE NEW!

While version one of the trilogy was in early development stage at the Codemasters studio all those years ago, progress was often held up as other employees working on different projects would crowd around the game, already hooked by the devastatingly enjoyable multi player feature. Right from the start then it was apparent that this game's strength lay in the ability to race against friends and when work began on V3 two years ago, it was



FIRE BALL

Turns vehicles into flaming balls that weave across tracks obliterating all they touch.



BOUNCE

A green charge encircles the player and this pulsates to knock competitors off the map.



CLAW

This acts as an extendible grabber that pulls front runners to the back of the pack.



MALLET

Over sized comedy hammers that rock the screen and raise screams of laughter.



CHOOSE TO RACE AS ONE OF EIGHT STEREOTYPED CHARACTERS.



EIGHT WAY FUN

Assuming that you only got one free controller with your PlayStation, setting up an eight way challenge match would set you back between £200 – 250 just for the multi taps and joypads! But if there is anyway you can beg, borrow or commander the equipment, you will certainly be treated to the greatest multi player game available for the PlayStation. Racing against the computer or a couple of friends may be fun, but eight people gathered around a screen, whooping and screaming needs to be experienced. The following sequence illustrates a typical multi play brawl.

- 1-Racing APCs are spread out but positions could alter at any moment.
- 2-One of the players hits a power up and hammers start to appear.
- 3-As is usually the case, most people blindly head straight towards each other.
- 4-Bundled together the wild hammer destruction begins but one player sneaks off.
- 5-While the pack annihilates itself, wimpish Cherry gets a one screen lead...
- 6-And takes the win. That player is now guaranteed to be a target for all racers.



obvious that this aspect should be carefully guarded. Programmers had to continually check that any changes made didn't cause the playability to suffer and were also in keeping with the spirit of the original.

Because of the precarious nature of tracks, much of *Micro Machines* charm has always lain with the ability to sneakily knock competitors out of the play area, and this combative nature lead programmers towards the idea of including weapons. It is now possible to pick up a variety of weapons and other power ups that add a new dimension to battles and immeasurably strengthens multi player fun. Neatly wrapped parcels are now strewn about courses in pre-determined positions and running over these will either endow one player or all players with special abilities.

Weaponry consists of flaming tyres, an extendible claw, missiles, dynamite, the ability

Opinion It is hard to fault *Micro Machines V3* in any way given that in every respect it improves on previous versions. Although game speed occasionally suffers when the screen is very busy and the way the computer works out who is winning in a multi player game seems unfathomable at times, this piece of software is amazingly detailed, graphically very polished, and superbly playable. Perhaps the only draw back is that getting the most from the game with as many people playing at once as possible will cost an arm and a leg in peripherals, but then that's hardly Codemaster's fault. Good value for money even in single player mode, *Micro Machines* is worthy of the title of best multi player game available for the PlayStation.

JM



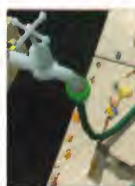
to turn into a fireball, bounce other cars into oblivion, turn invisible and turbo power. By far the most fun to be had is bashing the hell out of other vehicles using a giant mallet, especially when everyone playing gets a hammer. At this point in the proceedings the game turns into a bundle of cars, each of which is desperately trying to flatten their opponents - even the victims of these attacks are literally left screaming in ecstasy.

Messing about with toy cars may sound like a limited activity but a bewildering amount of options have been included to ensure the game's longevity. Innovative even when it comes to the

start up screen, the front end variables of *Micro Machines* are represented by a series of roads and buildings, driving between these it is possible to select all kinds of championships, time trials, test drives and single races. For the first time a practice level has been included in which girlie racer Cherry guides novices through a driving test. Winning certain challenges in single player mode will lead to the champion being pre-

sented with prize cars and smart collections can be built up on memory cards. Although these vehicles, which come in various souped up stages, can't be raced in normal competition, selecting Keepsie racing means a player can pit their treasured possession against one of those belonging to a friend. Who ever takes first place also takes both cars which is another welcome nostalgic look back at playground activities.

There is nothing in the least bit serious about the nature of *Micro Machines V3*, no complicated story line, no accurate simulation of race tracks or complicated controls to get to grips with. This game is more of a celebration of childhood games, even if it is produced with such technical brilliance and like playing top trumps at the age of 11 it's easy to pick up but very difficult to put down.



PSP RATING...

Graphics : 91
Animation : 90
Sound FX : 80
Music : 75
Lastability : 96
Playability : 92

94

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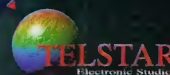
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Exhumed

Release : OUT NOW
Company : BMG
Price : £44.95
Players : 1
Genre : SHOOT 'EM UP

Surrounded by strange mysteries and gruesome legends, the exploits of the Egyptians and the grandeur of their ancient civilisation have been well and truly lodged within popular psyche. Although not much solid evidence as to how they lived their lives has survived, because of tomb raiding in Victorian times, mummified bodies, statues and paintings of evil looking beast gods and vaults of golden artefacts have allowed everyone's imaginations to run wild.

Questions such as how anyone was able to construct the Pyramids, or why the advanced civilisation that built them fell, are continually re-examined and in the age of the X-File, conspiracy theorists have even managed to add a touch of alien intervention to proceedings. This may sound like a stuffy old history lesson, or possibly the title sequence to a Hammer production, but the point is that in *Exhumed* all these gripping ideas have been tied together and if the game is able to live up to the setting, distributors BMG are bound to be onto a winner.

DIG THIS

Let's begin by setting the scene. An exhausted Karnak villager has been found wandering like a zombie through the desert, miles from his home and, just before dying of dehydration, has told of an unbelievable series of events. Fierce alien creatures have invaded the old city, devouring the women and children and turning the men into slaves. Many unfortunate victims have been skinned alive or brutally dismembered, while others were subjected to horrible torture, injected with fluids and then mummified whilst still alive. According to the said villager the invaders have also exhumed the body of the great King Ramses and taken it to an unknown location where its magical powers are being drained.

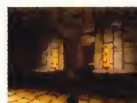
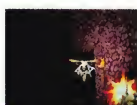
Turmoil and destruction is spreading into neighbouring lands and now forces of chaos are threatening the safety of everyone on the planet. Leaders from around the globe have joined together and sent the most modern soldiers and

weaponry into the valley of Karnak to wipe out the menace, but not a soul has returned. From a group of the most experienced operatives available, you have been selected to infiltrate the area and somehow neutralise the threat. Who knows why one man should make a difference where armies have failed, but it's either single handily take on the aliens, or wait for some bloke with a dog's head to turn up on your doorstep and try and remove your brain through your nose. What are you waiting for?



LISTEN TO YOUR MUMMY

Action begins at the Tomb of Ramses where the Pharaoh King's spirit lets the player in on a few deeply kept secrets. Apparently seven magical items were handed to Ramses by the gods but now these have gone missing and need to be relocated in order to vanquish the alien menace. Using a camel as a teleport system, which also serves as a save point, play then moves to the old city of Karnak and from here areas such as the Amun Mines and Karnak sanctuary can be explored. On each level a series of four symbols need to be found which act as keys and allow access to blocked off routes. Scattered around the levels are ancient artefacts that endow special powers, radio transmitters, parts that need piecing together before you can call for help, or a variety of weapons. Once one area has been completed more of the game map is revealed and using artefacts opens up fur-



ther possibilities even on areas that already been explored. Finding the sandals of Ikumtet for instance increases jumping ability so that previously inaccessible ledges can be reached. In all there are 21 locations to visit, but as each of these must be navigated several times, the overall task is pretty immense.

Vases, statues and barrels are placed around the game and smashing these open randomly reveals orbs of ammunition or health, nasty creatures or nothing at all. Unlike other first person shoot 'em ups all weaponry uses the same power ups and the item that gets replenished is the one held when the ammo orb is collected. Dispatching beasts can also reveal bonuses but again you are never assured of a power up, so attributes and fire power need to be jealously guarded. To begin with a single bar of health is all you have and it doesn't take many hits for the game to



end. Thankfully though golden ankhs can be found and these add an extra bar of life.

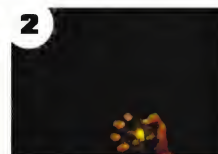
SEARCH OUT THE SECRETS

Following the example set by others of the same genre, progression relies on switches being pulled, traps avoided, puzzles solved and sections of corridors demolished. At the beginning of *Exhumed* it's fairly obvious what needs to be done, chiefly because shooting obviously placed oil lamps blows holes into the rock walls, so there's no need to search out hidden entrances. Problems do however become more obscure and require a degree of lateral thinking and a very sharp eye. Hazards such as ledges

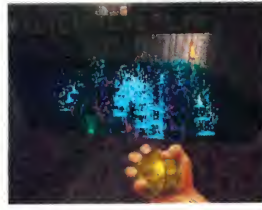
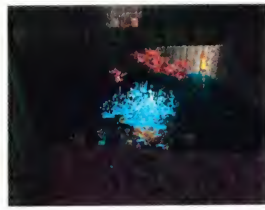
OTHER THAN THE INCREDIBLE JUMPING SCORPIONS, WHICH ARE A LITTLE HARD TO TAKE SERIOUSLY, ALL OF THE SPRITE BASED MONSTERS IN THIS GAME ARE VERY WELL DESIGNED.

IN THE NAME OF PROGRESS

Anyone who has already played one of the many *Doom* clones on the market will instantly feel at home with the kind of puzzles that need to be solved in *Exhumed*. Most non shooting action is level or trap related and finding safe routes through the game is more a case of trial and error play than brain storming. Here's an example of what to expect.



(1) AN ODD COLOURED SECTION OFF WALL LOOKS LIKE IT COULD BE A SECRET PASSAGE. (2) OUT COMES THE AMUN BOMB, WHICH IS SET FOR LONG FUSE BY HOLDING FIRE. (3) BINGO! THE EXPLOSION'S ON TARGET AND PART OF THE WALL COLLAPSES. (4) INSIDE IS HEAVILY TRAPPED WITH A FLOOR THAT DROPS AWAY AND FIREBALL GUNS.

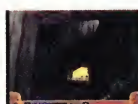
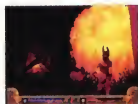


and pits also make the going tough and areas of toxic liquids or lava kill instantly so there's no room for error.

The first thing that really strikes you when playing *Exhumed* is the unbelievable fast nature of the graphics engine, which streams the polygon scenery exceptionally smoothly. Most other games have a run button on the controller, but here there's only one speed and that's balls out. In fact it's easy to get carried away, landing on precarious platforms only to find that your momentum drags you over the edge. Combined with an equally slick up/down view of the surroundings and intuitive controls, the sense of freedom offered is fantastic and movement feels very fluid. Once Horus' Feather is in your procession movement become even more open as your character is not only able

to hover with repeated key taps, but also fly and climb up sheer surface. These abilities are achieved through the cunning use of bombs or a Cobra Staff whilst levitating, shock waves sending your character rocketing skywards.

Graphics are all very solid, quite detailed and best of all when up close to anything, be it a monster or some bit of scenery, there's no problem with pixilation. Occasionally a slight difficulty with polygon warping is noticeable, giving a mild fish eye lens type effect as the machine tries to cope with perspective, but the only time this is apparent is when you stand still and look around quickly. Settings are stylishly realised and programmers have managed to capture the essence of ancient Egyptian architecture with sandstone pillars, statues, deep passageways and the like.



Opinion *Exhumed* is so smooth, fast and defined that other 3D blasts will pail in comparison. The locations look stunning, most of the monsters have been created well, the story line is gripping and the music complements the action perfectly. Some may find the challenge too strong, especially in later levels and returning to areas to discover new routes can become a little tedious, but in all other departments this is a top title that is very highly recommended.

JM



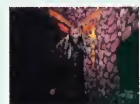
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?

There are around 20 different baddies to wipe out in *Exhumed*. They all look pretty well designed and animated, especially the end of level nasties, but best of all is the way they explode when destroyed. Here are a few seen before their bloody demise.



SCORPION

Easy to wipe out with any weapon. Jumps around like a Grasshopper.



MUTANT FLY

Best to use the M-60, but remember to aim high. Swarms very quickly.



ANNUBIS GUARD

Again the M-60 is your best bet with dog man. Watch out for his fire balls.



PIRANHA

Use the machete or an Amun Bomb. These hunt in schools and kill very quickly.

TO GET THE MOST FROM EXHUMED TIME NEEDS TO BE SPENT MASTERING EACH OF THE WEAPONS AVAILABLE, ESPECIALLY THE AMUN BOMBS.



OUT OF THEIR HEADS

Another area in which Lobotomy programmers should be applauded is the creation of a sinister atmosphere without using overly dark sets. It has always seemed a bit of a cop out to make graphics so poorly lit that you can't see what is going on, and *Exhumed* shows this to be the case. Environments are shadowy and dim in some places, but everything remains clearly defined and visually pleasing. Looks are topped off with spine chilling chants and choral music and the senses are engrossed rather than strained. Particularly impressive are the under water tunnels which have been lit beautifully and add very tense gameplay as your character starts to run out of air.

Most of the evil invaders are impressive sprite cre-

ations even if they do look a little 2D in such an amazing 3D world. End of level bosses have been included which are truly sick and have plenty of attacks at their disposal. Annubis Guards (which have dog heads), Birds, Mutant flies, Piranha, Mummies, Lava beasts and Kilmaat Guards have all been well designed and animated. The only bad-die that lets the side down are the standard cannon fodder scorpions that look daft as they unconvincingly bounce around.

Unlike almost everyone else on the planet, I'm not generally a fan of *Doom* clones – not even the original moves me unless it's played in link up mode. *Exhumed* however is of such high quality and so well thought out that everyone, even those who think they loathe the first person perspective shoots, shouldn't ignore this game.

PSP Rating...

Graphics : 91
Animation : 86
Sound FX : 80
Music : 85
Lastability : 91
Playability : 89

90

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Descent²



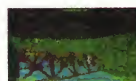
he cause of major motion sickness is back.

The original *Descent* was not only an exercise in frantic shoot 'em up action, but a great test of your sense of direction. To the uninitiated, *Descent* is *Doom* in spaceships, where you pilot a small craft through various mines in space battling renegade worker robots who have gone berserk, taking over the mines and holding the workers hostage. The twist comes in with the fact that since the mine shafts and passageways can go not only left and right but up and down (and winding all over the place in the process) you often find yourself entering a room or recovering from a battle only to realise that you can't work

out just where the floor is supposed to be. As well as this adding of a literally new dimension to the genre, *Descent* offered you various tasks to make your job just a little more interesting. For a start there are hostages to rescue and keys to pick up to allow you to access all areas. But your ultimate objective is to make your way to the main reactor which is found on each level. By destroying this you will send it into meltdown and you only have a few seconds to get to the exit before the entire level is destroyed, along with any spaceship pilot foolish enough to be hanging around at the time. It was this combination of qualities that made *Descent* such a great game on its first outing, but now that it's come back for a second visit will it be welcomed as warmly?

CRUEL BORDERS

Initially the differences aren't readily apparent. The game looks very similar to



the original, with the graphical style having changed a little. This is a problem, because while the first game looked fine at the time, graphics have improved since then and so it now looks a bit dated. Also the dreaded borders which so plagued the first game have made a return appearance, which is a bit of a shock in these 'all games must be optimised

times'. These borders are the worst that have ever been seen in a PAL title and give you the feeling that you are watching *Descent 2*: The wide screen director's cut. The robots also look a little basic, but then so do most things now that we've been spoiled by the likes of *Tomb Raider*, the light sourcing though is still as superb as ever. There is nothing like sitting in a darkened mine tunnel – and be warned, some of these tunnels are darker than ever before – and firing your lasers down it just to watch them light the way as they travel. The slow down is the real problem though. The

Release : OUT NOW

Company : INTERPLAY

Price : £44.99

Players : 1-2

Genre : SHOOT 'EM UP

YOUR SHIP STARTS OFF WITH JUST A WEAK LASER AND A FEW MISSILES, BUT YOU'LL SOON FIND PLENTY OF EXTRAS TO PICK UP ON YOUR TRAVELS. HERE ARE A FEW OF THE WONDERFUL THINGS YOU CAN FIND.

BLASTING PROGRESS

LASER



This is your basic weapon and the one which you will find yourself using nearly all the time. It might cost some energy, but this is your best all-round weapon.

VULCAN



The Vulcan machine gun offers instant hits and does not drain your energy. The ammo-chewing problems have been reduced by an increased bullet capacity.

SPREADFIRE



The laser equivalent of a shotgun, this shoots bursts of three energy bolts at a time which gives you more chance of hitting a target. Sadly it's not too powerful.

CONCUSSION MISSILES



Your basic flying explosive weapon. Unguided they may be, but with an ammo rack you can carry up to forty of them, which will turn a lot of robots into scrap.



first *Descent* suffered from a touch of the jerkiness when the action got a bit too busy, and the sequel sadly continues the tradition. So, the old problems haven't been fixed, but what exactly has been added?

For a start the robots have all changed. All the old ones have been replaced with a new squad who come in tougher varieties and are greater in number. They might start off stupid in the beginning, just walking into your shots without a care in the world, but as the levels progress so does their intelligence. What were once slow moving cannon fodder will become strafing, missile dodging and deadly accurate enemies, who are not to be underestimated. There may be a great temptation to rush into a room with your guns and missiles blazing, thinking you can overwhelm them

with extreme force, and for the first time that will work. But if you keep on doing that you'll soon find that you stand about as much chance as a hedgehog versus a juggernaut. Stealth and superior firepower will win the day here. The stealth is down to you, and the second? Well, that's been provided for. As well as the old *Descent* armoury there is now a huge selection of new weapons to turn the robots into scrap (see boxout). So while you're

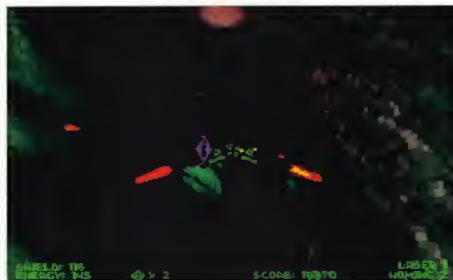
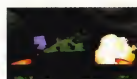
alright for offensive weaponry, the other main problem you've got is that of finding your way around. Which thankfully has been made very easy indeed.

BETTER THAN AN A TO Z

The three dimensional complexity of the levels means that a standard map is of little use to you. Therefore you have at your disposal a 3D wireframe map that shows the areas which you have already explored, you can refer to this at any time and can be zoomed in an out of and rotated at will. This is fine on the earlier and small-



(LEFT) A HOSTAGE FRANTICALLY DOES THE DANCE ROUTINE FROM YMCA TO ATTRACT YOUR ATTENTION. (BELOW) GET HOLD OF THE HEADLIGHT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO MAKE THESE MURKY LEVELS EASIER TO NAVIGATE.



FLASH MISSILES



Faster moving than the Concussion missiles, the Flash missiles reduce the chance of the droid dodging out of the way, but sadly they're still unguided.

HOMING MISSILES



The Homing missiles have a slight guided capability which enables them to home in on their target. But you have to be pointed at least generally at the enemy.

PROXIMITY MINES



Dropping these powerful Proximity mines behind you will ensure that any hapless mechanoid who runs into them suffers from a very nasty explosion indeed.

GUIDED MISSILES



You have only yourself to blame if you miss with these Guided missiles because once fired, you control its flight path with the aid of an built in camera.

SORRY, NO AIRBAGS

As well as being heavily armed, your ship has a good line in optional extras to make your trip just that little bit easier. You might think you're well equipped with the Guidebot, markers and flares, but once you've got hold of this extra gear you won't want to enter a mine without it. Some of these items only have a limited number of uses, so keep your eyes open for replacements.

AFTERBURNER



WHETHER RUNNING FROM SOME ANGRY ROBOTS OR JUST TRYING TO REACH THE EXIT BEFORE MELTDOWN, THIS ADD-ON WILL GIVE YOU A MUCH NEEDED BURST OF EXTRA SPEED.

HEADLIGHT



IF YOUR FLARES AREN'T LIGHTING THE WAY CLEARLY ENOUGH, THEN TURN ON YOUR HEADLIGHT TO GET RID OF THE GLOOM. WHERE'S THE WINDSCREEN WIPERS THEN?

QUAD LASER



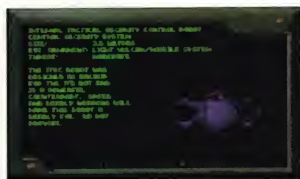
THIS UPGRADE QUAD LASER DOUBLES YOUR LASER BLASTS FROM TWO TO FOUR GIVING YOU A FAIR BIT OF EXTRA POWER AND AREA EFFECT. NOW TRY MISSING THAT TARGET.

CLOAKING DEVICE



TIME TO GET ALL STEALTHY AND KLINGON ON THE DROIDS WITH THIS WONDERFUL PIECE OF KIT. YOUR SHIP WILL APPEAR AS A FAINT SHADOW, SO PLAY IT CAREFULLY.

er levels, but as they get larger and more sprawling the map becomes almost impossible to read. To help with these navigational problems, *Descent 2* offers you a guide to help you find your way. This comes in the form of a droid called a Guidebot. This little fellow is found in a sealed room on every level, and once you've released him he will seek out anything that you tell him to. From keys and power ups to hostages and even the reactor itself, simply select what you need from the menu and the Guidebot will find it, all you have to do is follow him. This can get tricky when he leads you into a room full of robots, but providing you watch where you are going then you should have no problems at all. Even if you lose the Guidebot, he will eventually come back and find you. To make things even easier for you, your ship can also drop floating beacons which can mark your path, or just be used for marking areas of interest, so you have no excuse for losing your way. All these controls are handled surprisingly well, thanks to a totally redefinable control system which allows you to rotate and



strafe in many directions with the greatest of ease, while going forwards or backwards and accessing all your equipment. The sense of immersion you feel because of this is incredible, since you don't find yourself having to take time out to work out how to drop mines or strafe when you're in the middle of a fire-fight, and this helps the atmosphere considerably.

AN ADD ON, NOT A SEQUEL

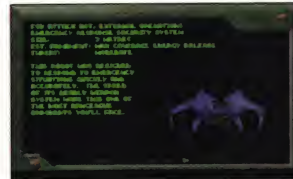
Descent 2 isn't a radical change from what has been before. All the technical problems like the borders and jerkiness are still there, and the graphics haven't improved enough to impress. The gameplay is still engrossing, from the frantic battles to the desperate race to the



(TOP LEFT) THE GUIDEBOT WILL LEAD YOU TO ANYTHING YOU NEED, INCLUDING THE ENEMY. (BOTTOM LEFT) THIS DROID HAS MULTIPLE GUNS WHICH HE FIRES AT YOU MERCILESSLY.



Opinion *Descent 2* is a very playable game, although it does have its flaws. It doesn't run incredibly fast, the graphics aren't up to much, and the borders are just downright unforgivable. Also there's an overwhelming feeling that there isn't really that much that's new. Sure, you've got plenty of new weapons and toys to play with, as well as the new robots and levels. But it feels so much like an add on pack, a *Descent Plus* rather than a true sequel. The playability is what really matters though and *Descent 2* has it in spades, whether playing alone or using the two player link-up option (surely one of the most playable link ups ever), you'll find yourself coming back to it again and again until you've cracked it completely. If you own the original *Descent* though it's probably best to try before you buy, but if you favour playability over graphics you'll probably find you've struck gold with this game. DB



(FAR LEFT) BEFORE EACH MISSION YOU ARE TOLD WHICH NEWER, TOUGHER ROBOTS IT WILL CONTAIN, JUST TO MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER. (LEFT) THE LIGHT SOURCING IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPRESSIVE THINGS ABOUT THE DESCENT GAMES.



exit with only seconds to spare, but it's still pretty much the same. The weapons and equipment are great fun to use and the levels and robots are as challenging as the first game, if not more so. But the lack of any real improvements or differences to the gameplay or graphics, means that owners of the original *Descent* may feel a little cheated by the sequel. It feels more like an

add on pack than a whole new game, but that shouldn't stop the hardcore *Descent* fanatic, or someone just looking for a very good shoot 'em up from taking a good look at *Descent 2*.

PSP RATING...

Graphics : 80
Animation : 76
Sound FX : 75
Music : 70
Lastability : 86
Playability : 84

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Soccer '97

What started as a trickle of football games is now officially a deluge, with old versions of PlayStation kickarounds now being superseded by updated versions; the equivalent of companies adding a better strike force to their existing line up. Surprisingly, Eidos have been the quickest off the mark with their update of the *Olympic Soccer* engine (the word sequel is not applicable for what is essentially a tinkering of the original), with Psygnosis and Gremlin still dilly-dallying with their Adidas and Actua follow-ups. Of all the original wave of soccer games, *Olympic Soccer* has probably fared the best. The shortcomings of the Gremlin and Psygnosis games became apparent after prolonged play and were such major faults that they effectively precluded players from becoming adept at the games. For example, what was the point of stringing passes together, when one man could weave through even the mighty Brazilian defence and score from a perfectly angled shot?

Olympic Soccer, on the other hand, had many small niggling problems, but none which actually prevented the player from becoming a seasoned pro, even the 'sweet' shooting angles could be avoided with careful defending, while the occasional goal keeping error could be forgiven after a succession of blinding dives and blocks. But with the soccer stakes raised again with the release

of Konami's *ISS Pro*, is the immediate playability of the Eidos' games engine still championship material?

THE SECOND LEG

It has to be said that the actual Olympic license gracing the first game was one of the weakest aspects of *Olympic Soccer*. Although it allowed the user to play as the likes of Italy, Argentina and Brazil (none of which are particularly regular Olympic sides!), football isn't exactly the first sport that springs to mind when the Olympics is mentioned, and one of Eidos' main priorities was to rectify this in the sequel. As such, under its new title of *Soccer '97*, the Eidos game is now an official PFA license holder and as such can use Premier and First Division teams and full team lists. This means that the likes of Arsenal, Leeds and West Ham now replace the mighty Brazilian, English and German sides, with Alan Green returning for all-new commentary duties, although the incredibly over familiar 'my grandma could

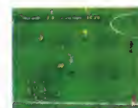
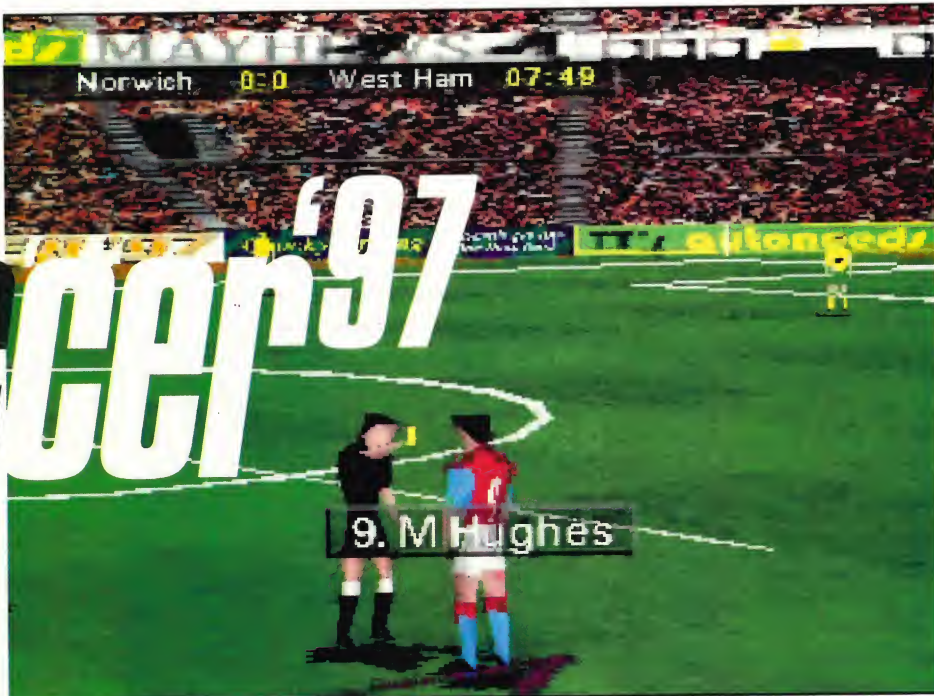
do better than that' is still annoyingly present.

Along with the lick of paint and new teams, the developers at Silicon Dreams have also taken the opportunity to

tighten a few nuts and bolts and rework several of the weaker aspects of the original Olympic code. For example, the 45 degree goal trick no longer works, and it is now impossible to cross a corner onto the goal line to head it in. Similarly, the incredibly annoying goal keeper habit of running out of the way of a back pass has been sorted out, with the 'keeper now doing whatever it takes to clear the ball.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Aesthetically, *Soccer '97* is pretty much indiscernible from its predecessor. The players are represented by



THE 3D POLYGON SPRITES AND BACKDROPS ALLOW FOR A NUMBER OF VIEWS, FROM THE FAMILIAR SIDE-ON PERSPECTIVE TO BEHIND GOAL AND ISOMETRIC POSITIONS.



Release : APRIL
Company : EIDOS
Price : £44.95
Players : 1-2
Genre : SPORTS SIM



the familiar polygon figures, and the referee still impales red and yellow cards on his triangular arm stumps, but the kit details are effective (there's even lettering on certain kits to represent their sponsors; Dagenham Motors, for example) although some of the away kits are a tad dubious. While the polygon players were more than acceptable with the first game's release, ever since Konami raised the stakes with *ISS Pro*, *Soccer '97* looks... well, a little primitive. PlayStation games are evolving at such an incredible rate that what was acceptable six months ago looks simplistic these days, and this has never been so true as with *Soccer '97*. While the Eidos code is as playable as ever, its simplistic 'pinball' passing and all action game-play seems crude compared to the detailed sprites and instinctive play offered by the Konami game. And once



you've got the hang of the through ball in *ISS Pro*, you really come to miss it when you return to *Soccer '97* where it is quite conspicuous by its absence.

TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE

Eidos were perfectly right to update the Olympic engine and I doubt if anyone could have foreseen just how big a step Konami were going to make with *ISS Pro* – with such a short gap between *ISS Deluxe* and the Pro edition, it seems likely that even Konami UK were caught unaware! Silicon Dreams have obvious-



ly acted on a huge wish list of changes they wanted to make to *Olympic Soccer*, and the game benefits from being generally a lot tighter than the original. The speed of play seems a lot faster, for example, and pressing R1 before reaching a suitable crossing angle sends the ball forward slightly, allowing for a more running game. However, with Konami's game doing all this and more, these additions actually add to the primitive look of *Soccer '97*. The speed, for instance, is now so exaggerated that it makes passing and long balls look ridiculously fast, while tackling is even more hit'n'miss than before.



If this all sounds completely negative I apologise. *Olympic Soccer* is still one of my most fondly remembered PlayStation games, and was a regular fixture in the office machines until *ISS Pro* came along. However, just as *Sensible Soccer* was one of the most playable games for the Amiga, after a while you start hoping for a little more depth of play and a wider variety of attacking and shooting methods. *Soccer '97*, even in its updated form, just doesn't provide these, and the linearity of play will come as a bit of a disappointment to hardened veterans of *Olympic Soccer*.

THE SIMILARITIES TO THE ORIGINAL OLYMPIC SOCCER CODE ARE OBVIOUS, BUT SEVERAL OF THE ORIGINAL'S FAULTS HAVE BEEN RECTIFIED.

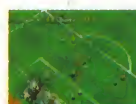
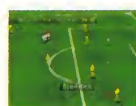
MARKS OUT OF FIVE

Soccer '97's team roster features 32 of the Premier League and First Division's finest, ranging from the might of Manchester United and Liverpool, to the battling minnows of Huddersfield and Sheffield Utd. Each team is rated out of five stars, with Man Utd and Liverpool obviously awarded five, while West Ham and Derby are ranked somewhere in the middle, and Norwich and the aforementioned Huddersfield teams are ranked at the bottom. In the interests of fair play, however, the balance can be restored in a two-player game with the option to tinker with the ratings. The tactical side of the game has also been tinkered with, and a new menu system allows the player to define roles for their players, such as giving Cantona a play-maker role as opposed to his more familiar striking position, or perhaps give David Ginola a man-marking role to close out a particularly dangerous striker.



Opinion The soccer genre is a fickle beast, and what's defined as the most playable PlayStation kickaround of the time, is inevitably replaced within two or three months. This fate has now befallen the *Olympic Soccer* engine and despite a few worthwhile additions to the basic code, *Soccer '97* is still along way behind *ISS Pro*. It's little things like the lack of a through ball and the often inaccurate passing system which highlight the problems, and while *Soccer '97* is fast and playable, its lack of depth and lasting appeal is all too apparent. It was an admirable decision by Eidos to update the engine, and the PFA license is welcome, but ultimately *ISS Pro* looks set to be the PlayStation league leader of its time.

SM



THE R1 BUTTON NOW HAS A DUAL PURPOSE. IN ADDITION TO EFFECTING LONG CROSSES WHEN IN POSITION, IT IS ALSO USED TO PUSH THE BALL PAST DEFENDERS.

PAST GLORIES

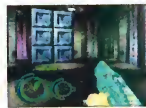
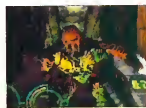
We now have a new benchmark in soccer games in the form of Konami's *ISS Pro*, which has proved that blending arcade playability with realistic sprites and instinctive controls is not the impossible dream that it used to be. As PlayStation owners continue their search for the greatest possible soccer experience on the Sony machine, they are more likely to be beating a path to Konami's door than to the Eidos building. Although *Soccer '97* is a very playable game and easy to pick up, sadly that alone is no longer enough. Unfortunately it

lacks the lasting appeal and variety of moves that we have now all come to expect, and whereas before it was a veritable Blackburn Rovers of a game, it is still comparable to Sir Jack Walker's team but the killer instinct has gone, with Shearer leaving Blackburn for Newcastle, and with the PlayStation soccer crown going to the well deserving Konami.

PSP RATING...

Graphics : 75
Animation : 69
Sound FX : 82
Music : 80
Lastability : 78
Playability : 84

81



Lifeforce Tenka

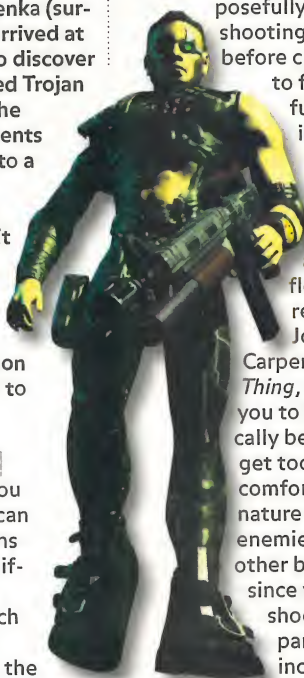
a nother *Doom* clone, you say? Well actually not just another

one because this has been made by Psygnosis, who are making their debut in this highly competitive genre.

Lifeforce Tenka differs from the rest of the pack because it is the first of the genre to draw the enemies with polygons instead of the traditional 2D bitmaps that we've had to put up for the last couple of years. This not only makes the enemies look better, but it means that at they are truly three dimensional objects. As all first perspective shooters need a wafer thin plot to justify the action and *Lifeforce Tenka* is no different. Set in a future where the world has been reduced to ruins and the only chance of a good life is on the off world colonies. You play Joseph B Tenka (surprise) who has just arrived at such a colony only to discover that a company called Trojan Inc has been using the colonists in experiments and turning them into a lethal cyborg army called the Bionoids. As luck would have it though, Tenka has brought his gun and warfare suit with him so that he can kick some polygon ass and bring Trojan to its knees.

POLYGON POWER
From the moment you start the game you can see that the polygons make a significant difference. Unlike the blocky bitmaps which populate the other games in the genre, the

enemies don't pixilate too badly even when you take a close look at them, and they all appear menacingly solid. Cyborg soldiers stride purposefully around shooting at you, before crouching



to fire powerfully damaging rockets. Heads with spider legs scuttle across the floor like a reject from John

Carpenter's *The Thing*, causing you to fire frantically before they get too close for comfort. The 3D nature of your enemies also has other benefits, since you can shoot off body parts to increase your grisly enjoyment and make your accuracy all the more important. Shoot a leg off a crawling head and watch it limp towards you, shoot the other leg and it sits there helplessly



before you finish it off. But the most fun to be had is with the cyborgs, with some careful aiming you can blow their head clean off with just one shot, and laugh with glee as it bounces across the room. The levels themselves also nicely designed, with twisting corridors leading you up and down slopes and into large rooms with high ceilings which show you just how far we've come from *Doom* in such a short time. There is a very cyberpunk feel to the scenery which gives the game a style all of its own which draws you

slowly but steadily into the game. The mission briefings are presented in the same style as Tenka talks not only to himself but to Zenith – the female voiced computer inside his head – and accompanied by strange graphical representations of your objectives. These range from simply trying to exit the level to destroying power generators and sabotaging computers, and involve a lot of exploration, finding of keys and of course shooting.

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

Instead of having to pick up a whole armoury, you are armed with just one weapon. This can be upgraded to fire various types of bullets, lasers and the like by morphing extra barrels and extensions onto the gun itself. You gain these upgrades by picking up green cubes which are left behind when you kill the enemy. The upgrades can also help you in other ways. There is a nifty Predator-style laser sight which can be used to select your targets from a distance and sniper shoot them before they can see you. It also comes in extremely useful in close combat in judging whether

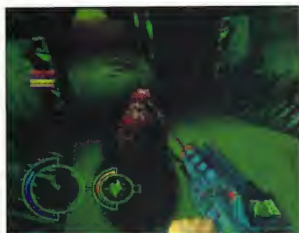


Release : OUT NOW
Company : PSYGNOSIS
Price : £44.99
Players : 1
Genre : SHOOT 'EM UP

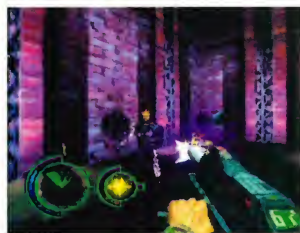
you have lined up your gun with enemies who are either above or below you (and let's face it, that's most of them). A radar screen is also available which gives you a read-out on where your enemies are, but not which ones they are, which leads to some Alien-style fears as you realise that there's a whole gang of bionoids waiting just around the corner. You also have a shield which holds back the enemies' attacks for a while, and flashes impressively with electric sparks whenever it takes damage. All in all, you're armed with an impressive selection of equipment to use against Trojan's bionoids.

NOW THE BAD NEWS

Unfortunately though, *Lifeforce Tenka* does have its problems. The game is dark, and to be honest a bit too dark. There's a difference between darkness of the atmospheric kind and the sort which causes severe eye strain, and *Lifeforce Tenka* stands just a bit too deeply in the shadows. It gets difficult to work out where exits and enemies are at times and you find yourself turning the brightness up on your television just to save yourself from getting a headache. Then there's the speed, a quality on which games of this sort can live or die. Your man Tenka doesn't move that quickly, even with the run button pressed down. But the rate at which he looks up and down is absolutely diabolical. Considering that this is a game which requires you to look about virtually all the time, he does it with the speed of someone in a neck brace. And this doesn't seem to relate the speed of the game as a whole, because the bionoids move around quite

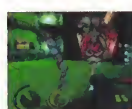
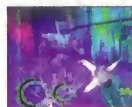


swiftly while you're trying to arthritically move your gun up or down to shoot them. The lack of any kind of map also adds to the frustration. Even though you can drop glowing beacons around the place to show where you've been – an idea never seen before – it's no replacement for a proper map of the level, especially when you're on a particularly complex one. The idea of picking up the cubes is also a good one, but you're never told how many you've picked up or how many you need to make it to the next upgrade, giving you a feeling that the upgrades are dished out randomly and giving you little to aim for. Add to this the fiddly control system which doesn't allow you to automatically level out your viewpoint if you've been looking up or down and doesn't give you independent strafe buttons which further restricts your control and you've got some frustrating gaming hours ahead of you. The fact that you're more likely to die because of a slow and hard to control character instead of being shot by one of the intelligent enemies is incredibly annoying and takes a lot away from the game. That said, *Lifeforce Tenka* is still a very playable game with some fantastic graphics which should be checked out. But be sure to try before you buy, because otherwise you could be banging your head against the wall for weeks to come.



(LEFT) THE USE OF POLYGONS TO CREATE THE ENEMIES ALLOW YOU TO BLOW BODY PARTS OFF THE BIONOIDS BEFORE YOU FINISH THEM OFF.

(BELOW) YOUR SHIELD FLASHES WITH ELECTRIC SPARKS WHEN IT ABSORBS DAMAGE.



IT'S MORPHING TIME

The most important thing to check out about any *Doom*-clone next to the graphics is of course the weapons. Your morphing gun can transform into a weapon capable of firing many different projectiles at your enemies. This is just a selection of what's out there for you to use.



SINGLE SHOT

Your basic starting weapon is of course the weakest and slowest, so you had better get an upgrade, and rather sharpish.



SINGLE LASER

The Single Laser is the lowest powered of the energy upgrades, but it still packs a hell of a punch. And leaves a nasty burn as well.



DOUBLE SHOT

Double your pleasure with this upgrade to the single shot. Your increased firing rate will clear most rooms with the greatest of ease.



DOUBLE LASER

Twice the power, twice the area effect and twice the fun are all yours when you get a hold of the powerful Double Lasers.



MACHINE GUN

Watch your gun recoil like crazy as you tear up your enemies with rapid fire. Watch your ever-depleting ammo supply though.



BURST LASER

The equivalent of *Doom*'s BFG might need some time to charge up, but once you've fired it you'll find nothing but dead bionoids.

Opinion *Lifeforce Tenka* is a very good stab by Psygnosis at producing a *Doom*-type game, and for a debut it's not half bad. The graphics are great and the extra features give you plenty to play with as you make your way through this challenging game. However, the problems with the control system and the lack of the character's speed among other things makes for a flawed classic rather than the blockbuster we were hoping for. It's a shame because the problems seem to be more related to game design than technical difficulties, so if Psygnosis can do it right next time then we could be looking at a real contender. DB

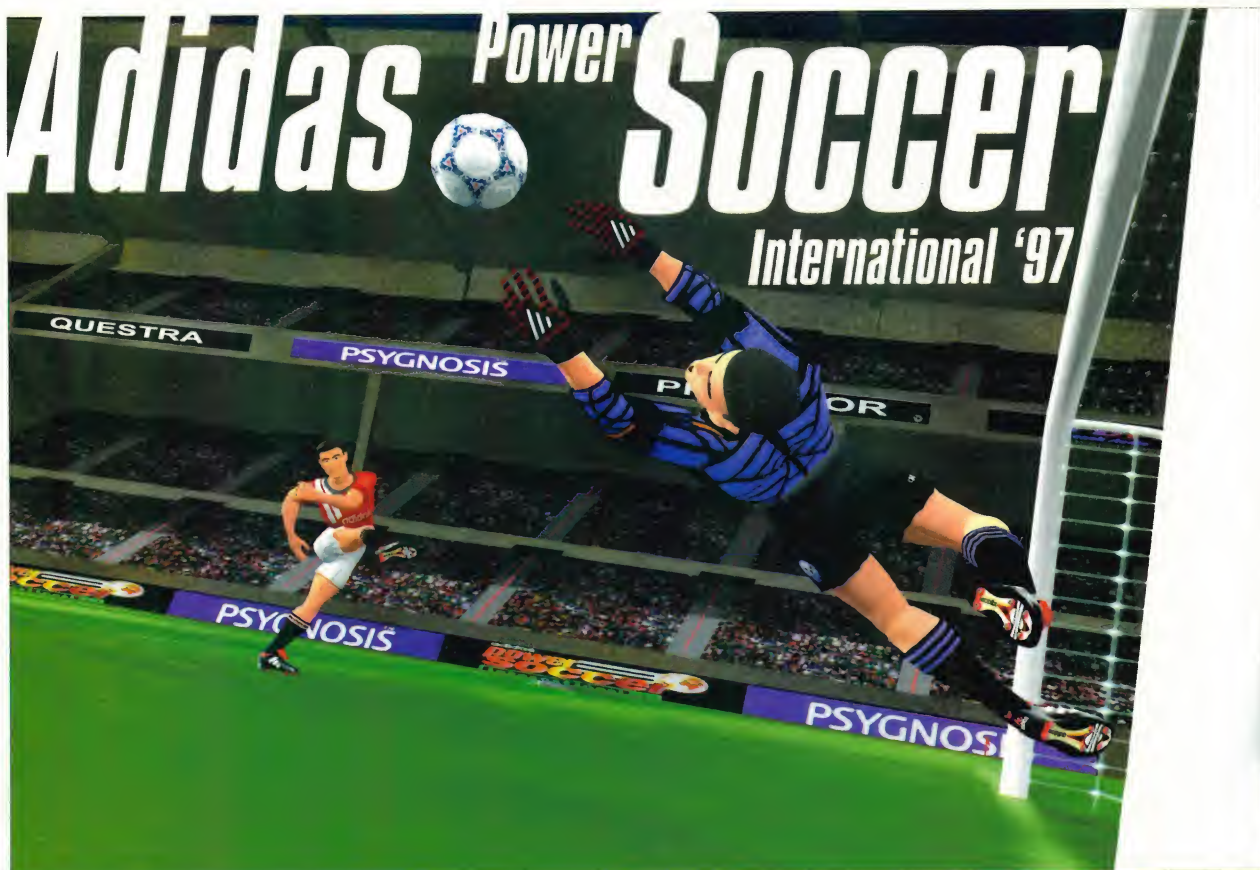


PSP RATING...

Graphics : 88
Animation : 87
Sound FX : 83
Music : 82
Lastability : 80
Playability : 80

82

(LEFT) THE RENDERED INTRO TO ADIDAS POWER SOCCER INTERNATIONAL '97 LOOKS JUST AS GOOD AS THIS BUT IT MOVES AS WELL.



You can never have too much of the same thing. That's what most software companies must think anyway. At a time when most games coming out are either football games or sequels, here's a football game which is also a sequel. However, don't fret, because Psygnosis are the bods behind this sequel to the highly acclaimed *Adidas Power Soccer*. So, what variations does *Adidas Power Soccer International* have to offer on the traditional theme of 22 men running around after a ball? The new version offers not only a fully updated set of team statistics for the Premier division, but for four other European divisions as well. Also you've got a new tournament mode to play with, which will let

you play your own Euro '96, and since you can play with up to four people, it looks like there's some serious football action to be had here. Looks however, can be deceiving.

LOOK AT THE FRONT END ON THAT

From the very beginning the whole thing is so polished that you begin to think it must have been sponsored by Mr Sheen. The menus and options are varied and comprehensive and offer you various choices such as whether you want to play the game in a simulation or arcade style, which have greater differences than you may think. The simulation mode offers your regular solid game of FA rules football, but things get really interesting when you realise what you can do in the arcade mode. The players gain access to a variety of extra moves including some quite nasty fouls which are great fun to use, if you can get away with that sort of thing. The goalie-crushing Predator kick also makes a return, which almost guarantees that you'll get a goal every time you use it. You can't do it every time though because each of the special moves uses up your player's energy, so your shots, runs



and tricks have to be chosen with extra care. These moves are all detailed in the controls menu, which deserves a special mention. This not only shows you which buttons do what (as it should), but gives you a text explanation

for each, as well as a rendered scene showing that move in action.

Sadly while the front end gleams, the main event is very dull indeed, for when you get to the match it doesn't look good at all. What might have looked state of the art a year or so ago now seems very out of date, and there doesn't look like there's been much of an overhaul either. The players all look pitifully under detailed and stick man like, and when you consider that most of your playing time is going to be spent looking at them they should really look and move a whole lot better than this. The much touted motion capture does look good for a while, but then you notice that there are jumps from one sequence to



Release : APRIL
Company : PSYGNOSIS
Price : £44.95
Players : 1-4
Genre : SPORT

DI REF!

The major difference in the arcade mode is the extra moves which your players can access on the pitch, some of which are downright nasty and certainly not approved by the FA. By mastering the various secret button combinations that are needed to activate these moves you can not only get the edge on your opponent, but you can also irritate the hell out of them as well.



PREDATOR KICK

Remember Hot Shot Hamish? Well even if you don't, you will appreciate this net busting kick that any goalie will have trouble saving.



another and the illusion is shattered. The goalies seem to suffer the worst since their shoulders have been put on at such an impossible angle. It looks like David Seaman has been replaced by the Hunchback of Notre Dame, which doesn't make you think that they've got the safest hands in soccer by any stretch of the imagination.

The overwhelming feeling is one of clumsiness, since the players never 'feel' right. The passes and shots don't gel together into a proper game of football, which is what people really want no matter how many options and features are thrown at them.

REPETITIVE REPLAYS

The replays are another failing. While at first they're a bit of a welcome novelty, they soon outstay that welcome with a vengeance. When you score a goal you get about five replays from various angles, which looks good until you realise that only one of them looks any good. But it's the replays after fouls during the arcade mode that cause the real hair pulling. Every time someone commits a bookable foul, there follows a replay of the incident. Fair enough you might think, what's wrong with that? Well, if you've



got the game on arcade mode and you're slide tackling a lot (quite common) then you get booked (fair chance of that) then you've got a bit of a problem, realise, when you've seen the fourth replay in three minutes that even though you can skip past them, you can't turn them off and you've got more delays than a train with the wrong kind of snow on the track. It manages to turn what should be a quick game of football into the American kind of football game, which manages to take a huge amount of time, with a lot of stopping and starting, and with the teams making very little progress down the field. This is more than a just a niggle, because it doesn't just slow down the game play, this cripples it. And to add insult to injury there are occasions when your players take it upon themselves to slide tackle the opposition without you asking them to, which makes you wonder just who is in control.

So what this means is that *Adidas Power Soccer International* initially looks good and does have some good ideas, but that's all. Extra moves are all well and good, and they do make for a different type of game but the novelty soon wears off. The game play isn't involving enough, and offers no real lasting appeal for the football fan choosing

between the huge number of games available. The original *Adidas Power Soccer* was a great game at the time but times change and this new version just has-

n't changed enough. A valiant effort from Psygnosis, but a greater overhaul was really needed this time out. With improved graphics and gameplay, maybe the next version will be excellent.



PSP RATING...

Graphics : 69
Animation : 71
Sound FX : 70
Music : 84
Lastability : 70
Playability : 68

70

Opinion While the original *Adidas Power Soccer* might have been a top kick about, this update shows that you need a lot more than just a few extra features to make lightning strike twice. The graphics are not up to the standard that we'd expect from a football game these days (or indeed any game) and the overall feeling is of a game which is somewhat stiff and unplayable. If the constant replays didn't cut into the game so much, then there would be a fair game of football to be had, but fair is all it would be. Until an *Olympic Soccer* beater comes along, then we'll just stick with that thank you very much.

DB



TWO HANDED PUSH

If your tackle just isn't enough, then just shove your opponent over to get the ball. Not very sportsmanlike, but there you go.



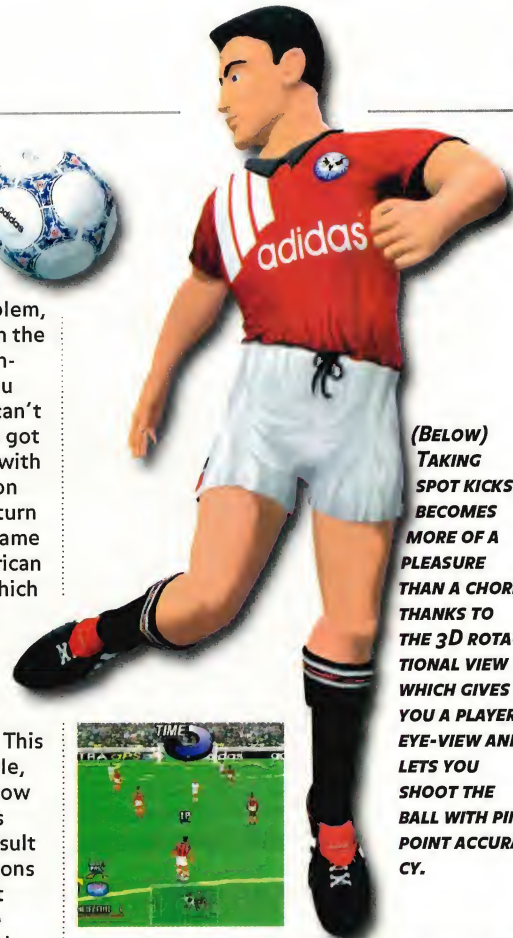
DANGEROUS KICK

This rather silly flying kick may be more Bruce Lee than Vinnie Jones, but if the referee isn't looking then you just might get away with it.



PULL SHIRT

Get back here! Don't let your opponent get away with the ball. Instead, just grab his shirt and move him right out of the way.



(BELOW) TAKING SPOT KICKS BECOMES MORE OF A PLEASURE THAN A CHORE THANKS TO THE 3D ROTATIONAL VIEW WHICH GIVES YOU A PLAYERS EYE-VIEW AND LETS YOU SHOOT THE BALL WITH PIN-POINT ACCURACY.

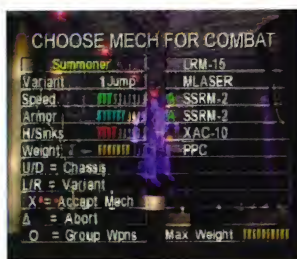
(LEFT) AN
EXAMPLE
OF THE
BEAUTIFULLY
RENDERED
INTRODUCTION
SEQUENCE
SHOWING
SOME
EXTREMELY
DETAILED
MECHS IN
BATTLE.

Mechwarrior 2



The PC conversion trail continues unabated with one of the greatest hits of the last few years, *Mechwarrior 2*, making its debut on the PlayStation. Set in a future where human-piloted giant robot vehicles are the main tool of warfare, you begin as a rookie mechwarrior trying to progress through the ranks to become a leader of one of the many clans which control the galaxy. What this basically means is some 3D shooting action set on various planets and terrains where you are often alone, outnumbered and outgunned. It's not as hopeless as it sounds though, because you have a huge number of mechs (robots) to choose from and an equally impressive range of weaponry and gadgets to arm them with in order to try and even out the odds. You don't start with all this at your fingertips because you have to earn the right to pilot the heavier more powerful mechs. This is done by undertaking a campaign of missions where you have to complete a variety of different tasks which will help your clan emerge victorious. The real question is though, can this PC game

Release : APRIL
Company : ACTIVISION
Price : £44.99
Players : 1
Genre : SHOOT 'EM UP



retain its depth when converted onto a console, while giving PlayStation gamers the accessibility and action which they desire?

MECH A CHOICE

The first order of business is to choose which warrior clan you are going to fight for, the Clan Wolf or the Clan Jade-Falcon. Both clans have their own missions so once you've finished the game with one clan you can go back as play as the other. Once you have

pledged your allegiance you must pick which campaign you will undertake, whether it is the long 16 mission tour, or one of the shorter four mission operations. After reading your mission briefing, it's time to choose the right mech for the job. At the beginning of your career you will only have access to the lighter mechs, which move quickly but don't have the strong armour and heavy weapons of the larger vehicles. The mechs all have different qualities, so it's a good idea to choose one which has the right abilities for your mission. Each mech also has two different weapon packages which can be grouped together into three different configurations. This is important because if you have too many energy weapons grouped together the heat they generate from continuous firing will cause your mech to overload and shut down, leaving you extremely vulnerable while it is cooling down. Luckily for you the mechs are versatile craft which pilot more like manoeuvrable tanks. You can twist the upper body left and right, allowing you to lock on to them quicker as well as strafe targets while on the move. There's a zoom option which allows you to not only check out and shoot targets from a distance, but which also extends your radar range in all directions to gain a better overview of the battle. This is perfect for sniper style attacks since it is possible to destroy certain sections of the enemies mechs and disable them quickly. By destroying their legs you impede their movement, but by destroying their weapon carrying arms will render them almost harmless. Whichever body parts you destroy, the results can always be observed with destructive glee on your targeting computer. Some mechs even come equipped with a finite amount of jump jets, which will allow you to leap into the air to avoid enemy fire and clear rough terrain with ease.



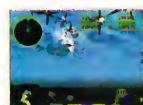
HIT AND RUN

Once the mech is chosen, it's time to get into battle. While many of your missions are of a search and destroy nature, you'll also find yourself having to destroy or defend installations, escort vehicles or undertake scouting missions. The operations that you undertake are fairly easy to start with, but soon they become a military nightmare, as you will find yourself completely surrounded by mechs whose only desire is to see you reduced to scrap metal. It's about this time that you have to develop your hit and run technique because until you get to the heavier mechs it's going to be very difficult to survive in a head-on fire fight. Another tactic to learn is that of flexibility, since your missions can often involve more than one objective. Sometimes you will only find out your secondary objectives once the mission is underway, so pacing yourself (and your ammunition) is a necessity. And the missions only get tougher as your campaign progresses. Occasionally you will find yourself undergoing a trial by combat in order to gain promotion through the ranks and to improve your standing within the clan. This is set in an arena where you are surrounded by mechs with no chance of escape. Failure could mean that you will be stripped of your rank, so success is imperative. If you ever manage to finish all of the campaign missions, there is still more to do thanks to the Instant Action mode, where you simply pick a planet and a mech and get stuck into some straight action.

FIGHT, FIGHT, FIGHT

So *Mechwarrior 2* gives you plenty of depth and options, but is it any good? The mechs look great, being smoothly animated and moving menacingly across the landscape. The graphics on the whole though don't have enough detail, with the structures in particular suffering the worst, with buildings looking

YOUR HUD IS IMPERATIVE TO YOUR SURVIVAL GIVING YOU ACCESS TO RADAR, TARGETING WINDOW, DAMAGE REPORT AND WEAPONS INFORMATION.



flat and uninspired. Also the mission areas seem rather isolated and artificial, with the expanses of terrain and vehicles surrounded by empty land in all directions. True, the action is often confined to a small area, but that isn't a good thing. It gives you the impression that you're fighting in small arenas rather than real planets and leaves you without a real sense of atmosphere and freedom. That said, the battles are fast and furious, but luckily your mech is a joy to fight with. The control system is such that you can jump into the air, twist in to target an enemy, and destroy them before you hit the ground. This is what really matters about games like this and

Mechwarrior 2 pulls it off nicely with some solid shooting action. However, even with all the other window-dressing, this is pretty much what the game is about all the way through. Although there are many different types of mission objectives, they usually come down to 'blow this up quickly and get the hell out of there'. If you could spend all day destroying giant robots then you will love this game. Other, more cerebral gamers will find that they will tire with this game a bit quicker than what they originally thought.

ONCE YOUR MISSILES HAVE BEEN LOCKED ON (ABOVE) THERE'S VIRTUALLY NO CHANCE OF MISSING YOUR TARGET.



MECH IT HAPPEN

Being complex bits of kit, your mech takes some getting used to. Before you take on the campaign missions, it's a good idea to get some training so you'll be able to handle yourself once you get in a real fire fight. You have six training missions to undertake, all of which will teach you various aspects of mech operation, while getting you used to the control system. Your instructor tells you what to do, and he's a pretty unforgiving and rude bloke, so don't screw up.



OBJECTIVES

This first mission is a basic introduction to driving your mech and working out your mission objectives. Mess this up and there's just no hope for you.



MECH HANDLING

Once you've got used to stomping about the place, it's time to go in at the deep end and try to get through the slalom course in an impossible fast time.



WEAPONS USAGE

It's gunning time! Hone your sharpshooting skills by destroying both stationary and moving targets by using your camera zoom and targeting computer.



HUNTING

Now that you've learnt how to move nice and quickly and you are able to shoot fairly straight, it's about time to start taking on some mech-shaped targets.



INSPECTION

The Inspection teaches you how to use probes to identify different pieces of enemy equipment and structures for reconnaissance purposes.

TRIAL TEST

Your final exercise is a duel to the death with a veteran mechwarrior to prove you have absorbed your training completely. If not, you'll learn about losing the hard way.

Opinion *Mechwarrior 2* is a very polished arcade shooter with initially a great deal of depth. However, this depth is soon exhausted since the game pretty much degenerates into a fire fight each and every time. To be fair though, the limitations on the missions are down to the isolated feeling you have of being stuck in a barren wasteland as opposed to a real planet and with a few more graphical tricks the atmosphere could have been so much better. Still, this is a more challenging blaster that has been seen for a long time and you will need some real skill and patience to complete it. Seek it out, then try before you buy.

DB



PSP Rating...

Graphics : 82
Animation : 83
Sound FX : 78
Music : 80
Lastability : 78
Playability : 80

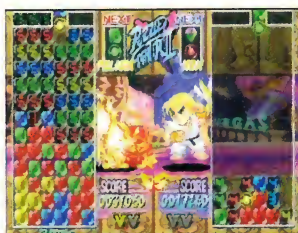
83

SUPER Puzzle Fighter 2



**CROSSING
TETRIS WITH
STREET
FIGHTER,
CAPCOM HAVE
COME UP WITH
SUPER PUZZLE
FIGHTER 2,
WHERE EIGHT
FIGHTERS PULL
OFF A VARIETY
OF MOVES
ACCORDING TO
THE WAY
COLOURED
GEMS ARE
DETONATED.**

to the casual observer, puzzle games might well look like a pretty dated genre and sadly some will probably feel that this kind of software is better left unreleased on the PlayStation. No matter how fast and furious the action might be, or how many twists are added to the standard formula, there's no way that a collection of screen shots can ever hope to relay their immense playability. Because most offer an infinite challenge with no way of actually completing the game, they also represent excellent value for money, a feature that many so called next generation products would do well to try and emulate. It seems rather unbelievable to think that it has been eight years since the game



that defined this genre was released onto an unsuspecting public. Invented on the PC in Russia of all places, Tetris single handedly created a whole new style of game that ruthlessly hooked all who gave it a try. Anyone who remembers encounter-



ing Mirror Soft's masterpiece will testify that sessions would go on for hours into the night, leaving an image burnt onto the retina and simple tunes looping over and over inside the brain when you eventually tried to get some sleep. Since then remakes have come and gone and generally most have proved enjoyable, though in some ways none seem able to touch the original.

BRICKS FROM THE SKY

While *Bust A Move 2* was unquestionably a variation of the theme, PlayStation owners have rudely been forgotten when it comes to frantically manipulating coloured bricks that fall from the sky. Capcom God bless 'em, are about to put this terrible oversight right with the release of *Super Puzzle Fighter 2*. Every new puzzler created understandably needs a new angle of some kind, and as you may already have guessed, battling *Street Fighter* and *Darkstalker* characters provide the latest

unique selling point.

The playing screen is split in half by a central fighting arena where two cute kid versions of Capcom's fighters face each other in combat. On either side are the contestant play areas into which a myriad of coloured cubes or gems rain; the idea being to fit these together into patterns. In typical puzzler fashion, while one block is falling the next in the queue is indicated. At irregular intervals coloured spinning orbs also turn up and connecting these items with the correspondingly coloured gems causes groups to be removed from one player's area which are then dropped down onto their opponent's stack. When they alight on top of the pile a number appears over each indicating how many more bricks must fall before it is possible to remove them. As patterns are formed then destroyed, each of the eight

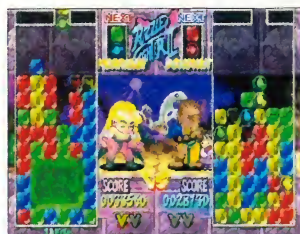


available characters perform recognisable kicks and punches effectively choreographing the fast moving action.

When two or more of the same coloured block objects come into contact with each other, larger and larger shiny jewels are formed and placing catalyst discs onto these monsters cubes results in

special attacks, such as Ryu's dragon punch. To go along with these spectacular attacks, rather than a couple of bricks materialising on your opponents screen, a whole wall falls, the patterns of colours determined by the choice of character. On offer are Ken, Ryu, Chun-Li, Sakura, Morrigan, Donovan, Felicia and Lei-Lei.

In addition it is possible to link the lines and blocks together and place discs round the wrong way or on top of indestructible numbered cubes to delay detonation. In this way chain reactions can be set up and attacks strung together.



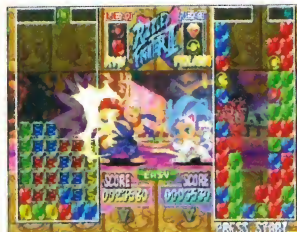
Release : APRIL
Company : VIRGIN
Price : £39.95
Players : 1-2
Genre : PUZZLE



Every so often a turning diamond will show up and whichever gem it touches, all blocks of that colour will be removed and thrown over to the opponent. When there's no room left in a player's area to build anymore lines, the round ends. If this is achieved in a particularly impressive fashion, with the breaking of large blocks and chains, the character responsible performs a super finish that whites out the screen.

STRANGE BREW

The idea of beat 'em up specialists Capcom entering into the puzzle market, and then linking the game to such a well known name as the *Street Fighter* brand, at first sounds more than a little strange and it is easy to imagine how this project could have turned out to be a big gimmick lacking any substance. Instead *Super Puzzle Fighter 2* turns out to be a polished semi-precious stone if not a completely floor less gem.



Traditional features from Capcom's previous fighting games are cleverly incorporated; for instance battle modes initially pit the player against selectable characters, then against boss Gouki, who once defeated becomes available for use.

Touches such as these succeed in mixing the genres in a fresh and interesting way. Although the inclusion of graphic battles is on the whole a cosmetic piece of programming, these fight sequences subtly add to the overall enjoyment of the game, giving the gratifying feeling of pulling off complicated special moves or managing to white out the screen. Normally accessed by a frantic combination of button presses, the process of stringing together attacks has now been replaced by the need for cerebral dexterity and strategy.

Of course looks and feel alone aren't enough to make a decent game. Luckily *Super*

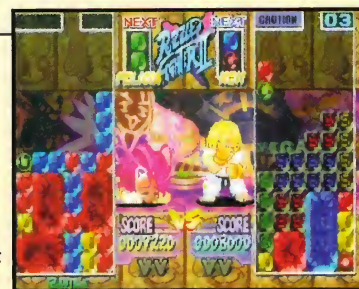
Puzzle Fighter 2 also has strongly engrossing game-play that is frustratingly simple. Tactics are easy, but need constant remodelling according to the style of the opponent and the bricks available at any given time. Then there's the two player mode which is so frighteningly competitive that it usually degenerates into insults and occasionally leads to blows!

Super Puzzle Fighter 2 may not stand hours upon hours of continuous play, at least not without causing hallucinations, but it will stand a much longer test of time. Complicated, flashy, or stunningly original this ain't, but if a game is not just playable but highly addictive six months down the line, what more could you ask for.



WINNING WAYS

There are several ways to play *Super Puzzle Fighter 2*: each method has pros and cons and none of these are infallible. Destroy blocks as quickly as possible to get an important advantage and keep stress to a minimum, but without heavier attacks losing is inevitable. Trying to link together great chains, or building huge gems might produce that knock out blow but can be risky as luck plays such a major role, sometimes everything works out nicely and other times it all goes horribly wrong.



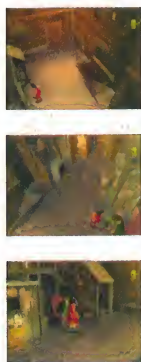
Opinion If you expect to be instantly stunned by the games you buy, *Super Puzzle Fighter 2* will probably turn out to be a disappointment for the first few rounds, not because of a lack of playability but because of its apparent simplicity. Give this game the chance it deserves however, and slowly and surely you'll get terribly hooked. Capcom could have come up with a real turkey here, chancing a new market while sticking with old characters, instead they've developed a must for every collection. JM



PSP RATING...

Graphics : 69
Animation : 71
Sound FX : 65
Music : 65
Lastability : 93
Playability : 91

92



THE MULTIPLE VIEWS OPTION IS A REAL HELP IN SOME OF THE LOCATIONS. AS YOU CAN SEE HERE, THERE ARE THREE POSSIBLE VIEWS WHEN YOU ARE STANDING IN JUST ONE PLACE!

The City of the Lost Children



here are two rules when it comes to games based on films.

Rule One: they should be unimaginative pap. Rule Two: they should be based on massive blockbusters that everyone knows about, so that if the game falls under Rule One then some people will still buy it just because of the name. Now these rules aren't cast iron, as anyone who has played *Die Hard Trilogy* will tell you, which while conforming nicely to Rule Two, completely ignores Rule One by being completely brilliant. Now comes *The City of Lost Children*, which has so far broken one and a half of the rules. Firstly, it's based on a French art house film. And a French film that doesn't have Gerard Depardieu in it at that. And while it wasn't entirely unsuccessful, we're not talking about *Independence Day* box-office here. So that's your blockbuster rule bugged. And then it just goes and flaunts the second rule by being an adventure game with no shooting in it whatsoever. So that's the unimaginative angle scuppered as well. As for the pap bit? Well, let's have a look...

NIGHT AND THE CITY

The game is an adventure in the third perspective cinematic camera angles style of *Alone in the Dark* and *Resident Evil*, except you're a twelve year old girl who lives in a bizarre city surrounding by green water as opposed to a gun toting hero. You're an orphan called Miette who gets sent out to do various robberies by the teacher Pieuvre. If you don't do as you're told then you're put in a cellar with little chance of escape, so to begin with, you've got to do as you're told. As soon as you begin playing you can see that this



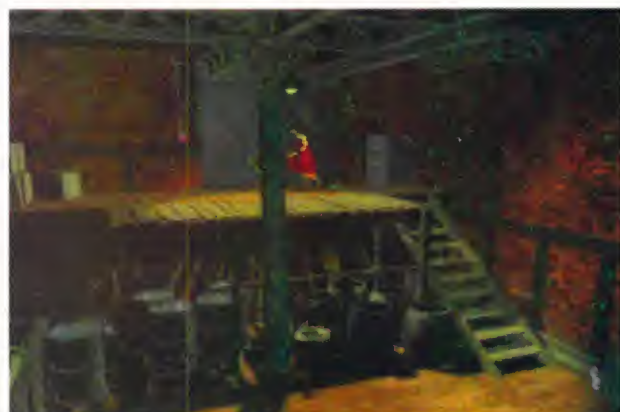
is not a shoddy product. Miette is nicely drawn and smoothly animated, and the city looks fantastic. The locations are beautifully detailed and shot from very cinematic camera angles which, along with the moody lighting effects, make your journeys through the eternally dark city very atmospheric indeed. The camera system also benefits from a neat touch whereby you can change the camera's viewpoint when you're standing in certain places, which allows you to get more of an idea of your current location. The charac-

ters themselves are not as well drawn as Miette, but they still don't look too bad. You converse with these characters by simply walking up to them and hitting the talk button, whereupon you will enter into a scripted conversation with them. This isn't a great system since it offers you only linear conversations, which also repeat over and over whenever you talk to them again.

FRUSTRATION

Miette does have other abilities other than talking – she can carry up to 10 objects at once, run, activate objects

and crouch to hide from people – the only one that she does seem to lack is the ability to examine objects and locations. She'll usually tell you when a door is locked, but the rest of the time if you get something wrong you'll get the general reply of "I can't do anything" which is guaranteed to drive you insane once you've heard it a few times. The problem is though you'll be hearing it nearly all the time because *The City of Lost Children* isn't a very helpful adventure. The viewpoints, while having that handy change camera feature, are quite often seen



Release : MARCH
Company : PSYGNOSIS
Price : £39.99
Players : 1
Genre : ADVENTURE



from a way off, meaning that Miette is quite small on the screen. This means that you often can't see where exits are because of the angle and distance of the view, and since the doors don't open automatically as in *Resident Evil*, you end up searching around and trying to activate locked or non-existent doors which leads to the "I can't do anything" mantra filling your ears. To add to your frustration even more you will spend a huge amount of time walking around since the

locations are so large and so spread out. Objects are no easier to deal with since they are very small (very, very small) which makes them almost impossible to find. Thankfully there is an object window which flashes up a picture of an object when you are near it, but this means you have to systematically walk up and down through every location since you have no idea what you've missed. The puzzles



zles themselves are quite logical, but thanks to the aforementioned problems, they are hellishly, joyypad crushingly, frustrating. With some extreme perseverance you can work out the problems, but it's not an easy task by any means.

The City of Lost Children may have beautiful graphics but once you dig beneath the surface you'll find a lot of frustration mixed with some fairly average gameplay. Hardcore adventurers may have what it takes to stick with it, and they might have some fun in the process. As for those without infinite patience, it's best to steer clear of this badly implemented adventure.



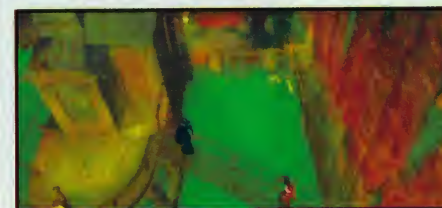
THE LOCATIONS WERE TAKEN FROM THE ACTUAL SETS IN THE FILM, SO THEY'RE BOTH ACCURATE AND ATMOSPHERIC.

THE LIKELY LADS (AND LASSES)

The residents of the city aren't what you'd call clean cut folk. In fact, they're a downright nasty bunch, and they don't have much time for a kid like you. You'll need to learn how to deal with them if you want to progress through the game, as they mostly have some object or other that you need, or else bar your path to an object.

PIEUVRE

THE CRUEL HEADMISTRESS OF THE ORPHANAGE IS IN FACT SIAMESE SISTERS JOINED AT THE HIP. SHE'S THE ONE WHO SENDS YOU OUT ON YOUR ILLEGAL ERRANDS, AND NEVER SAYS THANKS.



THE WATCHMAN

THE MAIN OBSTACLE IN YOUR FIRST TASK. THE WATCHMAN GUARDS THE CASHIER'S HUT WHICH YOU HAVE TO STEAL MONEY FROM, SO YOU'VE GOT TO GET HIM AWAY FROM HIS POST.



PELADE

DECKCHAIR-BOUND PELADE IS A LAZY BLOKE WHO WORKS FOR PIEUVRE, EVEN THOUGH HE HATES HER GUTS (ALTHOUGH HE DOESN'T LIKE CHILDREN MUCH EITHER), NOT A VERY NICE CHAP.



CYCLOPS

THESE STRANGE MEN ARE QUITE TOUGH AND GUARD MANY AREAS. THEY DO HAVE A WEAKNESS THOUGH: THEIR SENSITIVE EARS CAN'T STAND LOUD NOISES. SO FIND A NOISEMAKER!

PSP RATING...

Graphics : 86
Animation : 82
Sound FX : 74
Music : 84
Lastability : 70
Playability : 64

68

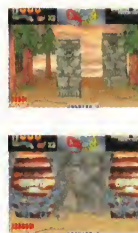
Opinion This could have been a superb adventure game, but it's not. Why? Because while the graphics and music are brilliant, the puzzles are extremely frustrating because finding objects, exits and other things to interact with is a task which is almost downright impossible thanks to the size and design of these same graphics. If you don't mind having to spend a lot (and I do mean a lot) of time walking from location to location, have the patience of a saint and like your games slower than a one-legged tortoise, then this one's for you. A crying shame. DB



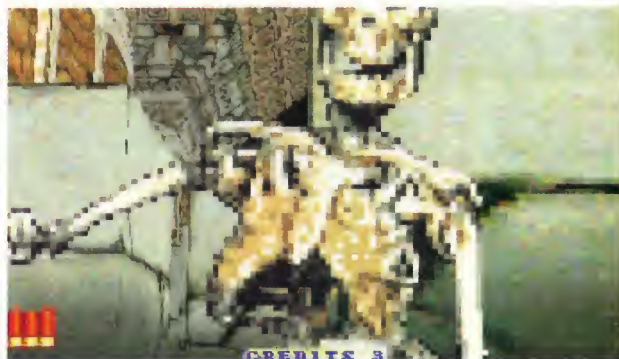
AS YOU CAN SEE FROM THE ROUGHNESS OF THE GRAPHICS, THE CLOSER YOUR ENEMY GETS, THE MORE PIXILATED THEY BECOME.



Light gun games have always, in the home market at least, been perceived as a bit of a novelty item. In the arcade they work just fine, but the additional purchase of a light gun for playing at home puts many console owners off. Who wants to pay out thirty-odd quid for a peripheral when there might only be one or two games released for it? This creates a vicious circle of course, since software companies are only going to develop light gun games if there are enough people who own light guns. Thankfully, *Die Hard Trilogy* changed all that. The *Die Harder* shooting game was so good that it sent people buying light guns in their droves, which in turn has led to more gun games being brought out. *Area 51* is the most recent of these, but *Lethal Enforcers* will be arriving soon, and of course Namco's



Time Crisis will hopefully be out in September. To tide over the gun nuts until then though is Konami's arcade conversion of *Crypt Killer*. This archaeologists-with-firepower shooter stood out in the arcades for the fact that not only could three people play at once, but that instead of the usual pistols, you had big plastic pump-action shotguns to fire. These features haven't made it to the PSX version though, since you can only play one or two player games, and no one is selling a light shotgun in the shops yet. The question is then, once *Crypt Killer* is stripped of its gimmicks, is it any good?



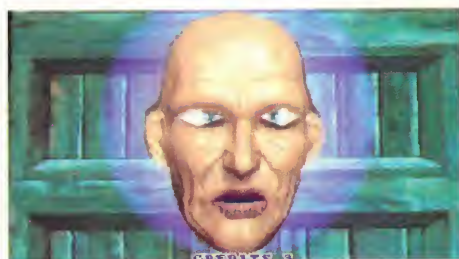
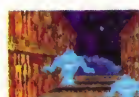
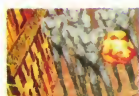
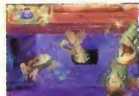
of attrition, since you're attacked by hordes of enemies which require you to be constantly firing your gun. This *Operation Wolf*-style gameplay differs from most gun games these days, which rely more on a few enemies which have to be shot very quickly and accurately. The idea of the game is to retrieve the six eyes of guidance, by completing their

respective levels which can be played in any order you choose. Once you've chosen your level, you begin moving in a fixed route through the various ruins and terrains, and the monsters come at you in droves. You have a semi-helpful voice which occasionally tells you which direction the next attack will be coming from, but if the camera starts panning

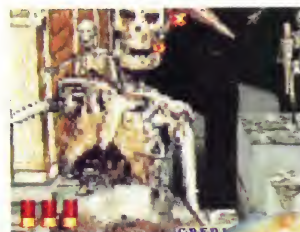
Release : MARCH
Company : KONAMI
Price : TBA
Players : 1-2
Genre : SHOOT 'EM UP

OPERATION CRYPT KILLER

Crypt Killer differs from previous PlayStation gun games in that it's pretty much a war



upwards, it's not much help being told 'look up' is it? The enemies range from mummies and demons to packs of rats, bats and birds, and even mermen in some of the water stages. Yes there are water stages where you can wade



and swim in good old H₂O instead of plodding around on dry land. And you're liable to be doing this quite a lot since on some stages you'll be jumping over lava lakes, dropping through collapsing floors and turning this way and that as you work your way to the end of the level. Once you've reached the end of the current section, you're faced with two chained doors, by shooting away the chains you can choose which route you wish to take, meaning that you can play each level according to your preference. You can then choose your path twice in each level, meaning that you can play each level in four ways.

GORGONS AND GUNS

Whichever route you choose, you will eventually reach an end of level boss. These major monsters come in many different and bizarre forms, from a Medusa-like snake lady to a cave dweller made completely out of rocks. These creatures leap around the place throwing missiles which must be shot before they hit you, while all the time you're trying to shoot them enough to deplete their huge energy bars. Once this is done, you can grab your eye of radiance and get onto the next level. Now, this is all well and good, but what about the guns? As previously mentioned, there aren't any wimpy pistols in this game, your general weapon is a shotgun which has a small area effect which is fairly easy to aim, but unfortunately you only have six shots to fire before you have to reload. There is an auto reload option available which makes things a lot easier, but it does take a lot of the skill away from the gameplay. If things are getting too busy for you though, you have three smart bombs which will clear the screens of all minor enemies and cause some damage to the bosses.



THE GENTLEMAN WHO LOOKS LIKE A CROSS-EYED VERSION OF THE HOOD IN THUNDERBIRDS IS IN FACT A GIANT HEAD WHO POPS UP FROM TIME TO TIME TO OFFER YOU NO HELP WHATSOEVER. HOW USEFUL.

CHEW ON THIS

As in most gun games, you've got a selection of weaponry to unleash on those undead and freakish creatures you'll meet on your travels. You'll find these in the chests which lie around the levels, so simply shoot the chests and an icon of the weapon will appear at the bottom of your side of the screen. If you shoot the icon, you get the weapon, it's as simple as that.

AUTOMATIC

The only additional weapon which does not eventually run out of ammo. It's basically a regular shotgun with 12 shots instead of the usual six.

SHOTGUN

Essentially a much bigger, badder and meaner version of your trusty scatter gun, the Shotgun has a larger shot spread and much more power than many others.

GATLING GUN

Strafe multiple enemies with this machine gun which fires bursts of bullets every time you press the trigger. Hold it down for a continuous stream of fire.

GRENADE GUN

Slow firing but incredibly powerful, the Grenade Gun can destroy more than one enemy with just one shot and therefore clears the screen in seconds.

Opinion Calling this game drivel would be too kind. The graphics embarrass the PlayStation console severely and gameplay is dull and repetitive. This makes very average games such as *Area 51* look like *Time Crisis*! It's this kind of shameful release that could put many people off buying a light gun. To be fair though, Konami didn't have much to work with, since the coin-op version was terrible anyway. Why this was converted is a mystery to me, and probably will be to anyone else who plays. Avoid this game like your life depends on it. DB

WHAT A LOAD OF CRYPT

Being so packed full of features you might be thinking that this was a pretty good game. But don't get your hopes up, because *Crypt Killer* is sadly quite awful. The graphics are laughably bad, with the badly drawn, bitmapped monsters jerking towards you in a perfect example of useless animation. To see an incredibly pixelated merman jump in front of the camera registers more amusement than surprise. With the regards to the scenery itself, clipping is rampant throughout the levels, with sections of tunnel popping into view as you advance. As for the gameplay, there's only one word - dull. There isn't really much skill involved at all, all you have to do is keep firing as much as possible and you'll get through. There are even certain sections in the game where you can just keep fir-

ing at one point on the screen and you'll kill every monster with no problems at all. *Crypt Killer* is (if you haven't guessed already) an absolutely terrible title, which is only of interest to those who like seeing skeletons skip across the screen like they're playing hopscotch, and who like throwing their money away on games they won't play for more than five minutes. The recent popularity of light gun games isn't going to last long if games like this are indicative of the quality of the genre. Let's just hope *Time Crisis* lives up to the hype and justifies all the light gun purchases out there.

PSP RATING...

Graphics : 21
Animation : 18
Sound FX : 27
Music : 29
Lastability : 26
Playability : 27

27

CENTIPEDE WAS ONE OF ATARI'S GREATEST SUCCESSES. IN FACT, AS ATARI PREPARED FOR THEIR LATEST HIT, THEY WERE CONCERNED THAT TOO MANY PEOPLE WERE STILL PLAYING IT! CONSEQUENTLY THEY UPPED THE PRICE OF A GAME, BUT THE MACHINE'S POPULARITY BOOMED FURTHER STILL, AND THE MACHINE STAYED IN THE ARCADES FOR AN UNHEARD OF (THEN) TWELVE MONTHS!

Arcade's Greatest Hits: The Atari Collection 1



Atari have sadly become one of the forgotten names of the software industry, but their part in the evolution of video games should never be forgotten forever. They were the first company with enough vision to dip a tentative toe into the coin-op industry and were pioneers with cabinets such as *Asteroids* and *BreakOut*, and were later to be the first company to try to mix laser disc technology with their video game skills with the *Firefox* coin-op. Granted, Atari were never the most consistent coin-op developer, but along the way they gave us the first vector-based games, some of the most memorable shoot 'em ups imaginable, and even their less adventurous years still managed to throw up the ground-breaking *I-Robot*. Also, let us not forget that it was Atari who made the greatest console development of all time. The Atari VCS (or 2600) was the first home machine which allowed users to insert different game cartridges. Gone were the staid Binatone and Pong machines, instead Atari's machine actually allowed budding games players to marvel at versions of *Space*

Invaders, *Asteroids* and all the latest arcade machines in the comfort of their own home. Sadly, the VCS was the last great advancement for the company. The 5200 and 7800 consoles died a death, and the Atari 400 and 800 computers never gained the recognition they deserved. Despite a brief high with the ST in the mid-eighties, Atari's descent was as fast as their rise with the 64bit Jaguar acting as the final nail in their corporate coffin. Still, we have come to praise Atari, not to bury them – and that's exactly what GT's 2nd 'Greatest Hits' is here to do.

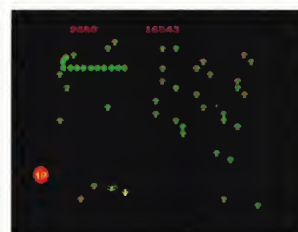
SOURCE CODE

Greatest Hits contains six of the company's oldest and most ground-breaking titles. The vector-based side of Atari's coin-op division is represented by *Asteroids*, *Battlezone* and *Tempest* (which will please Interplay no end!), while the sprite department is fortified by

the inclusion of *Missile Command*, *Centipede* and *Super BreakOut*. Each title dates back to the company's halcyon days of the early 80s, with *Battlezone* the youngest of the elderly sextet. As with the last GT collection, the creation of each of the six is detailed in an interesting FMV sequence, where the brains behind the titles describe the atmosphere in the Atari offices back then, and describe the headaches and inspiration behind the games. The authenticity of the conversions is then further verified as a voice-over details that the exact code for each of the six was ported directly over to the PlayStation, and thus every aspect of the original machines – bugs and all – has been recreated in these home versions.

MEMORY BACKLOG

As with all retro compilations, there's always a real buzz of nostalgia when a perfect copy of an old favourite loads for the first time. For me, the most welcome addition to the collection was the conversion of *Asteroids*, and no sooner had the 'duh-duh-duh' music started, than I was transported back to a holiday resort in Devon all those years back. The games are selected from a jazzy opening sequence which, following, the obligatory rendered introduction which moves from one game to the next, unveils six arcade cabinets bearing the relevant

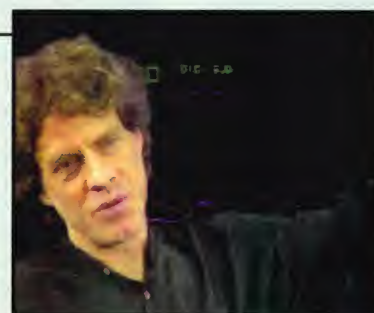


game's name. Selecting one of the games then shatters the cabinet in a manner associated with the chosen coin-op (a missile bolt flattens the *Missile Command* cabinet, or the titular *Centipede* crushes another, for example).

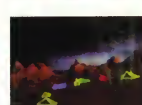
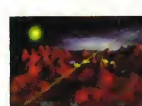
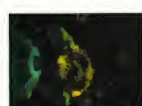
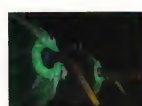
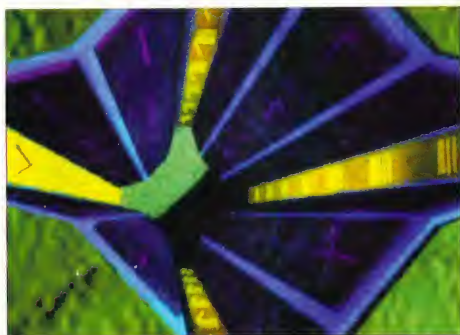
Anyone familiar with the original games will be

BEHIND THE SCENES

Incredibly, the six games compiled were the creations of a team of just three programmers. Ed Logg created both *Asteroids* and *Super BreakOut*, and also co-wrote *Centipede* with Dave Theurer. In turn, Theurer was also the brains behind *Missile Command*, while the final title, *Battlezone*, was the creation of Ed Rodberg. In the game's impressive FMV history, the three programmers are interviewed at length, and it becomes apparent that they all enjoyed their time at Atari, with the golden era pinned down to the late 70s and early 80s. In specially recorded interviews, the trio detail how the informal atmosphere at Atari (including bizarre meetings centring around wind-up frogs), and behind the scenes tales which make the FMV sequences more of an integral part of the CD than just a bit of extra padding.

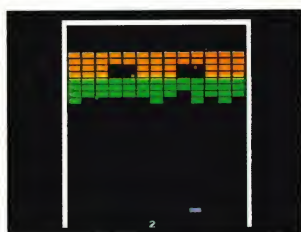


Release : APRIL
Company : GT
Price : £44.95
Players : 1
Genre : COLLECTION



THE INTRO HIGHLIGHTS ASPECTS OF EACH GAME. FOLLOWING ENCOUNTERS WITH A TEMPEST TUNNEL, THE CENTIPEDE LEADS THE PLAYER TO THE BATTLEZONE ARENA..

delighted by the accuracy of the conversions, and the PlayStation perfectly recreates the vectors of *Asteroids*, *Battlezone* and *Tempest*, while the level of detail to the simplistic *Super BreakOut* even includes the 'colour clash' which changes the colour of the ball whenever it comes into contact with the coloured blocks and bats.



TEN YEARS LATER

Of course, it's no surprise that after over ten years of advances, the Sony machine can mimic a hoary old coin-op perfectly, but the whole point of these conversions is that they are a trip down memory lane. As such, the *Battlezone* and *Asteroids* games are likely to be welcomed with open arms, and *Missile Command* is still as frustrating and enjoyable as it ever was, although the Trackball used to control the original made it slightly easier than the PlayStation's joystick. No matter how good the conversions, though, there is only so long the rose-coloured specs can stay on, and after a while the limited nature of these ten-year-old

titles becomes apparent. To be fair, *Asteroids* is as playable as ever and the Hyperspace button annoys as much now as it did in Sussex, but *Battlezone* seems slow and tortuous to play, whereas at the time of release it

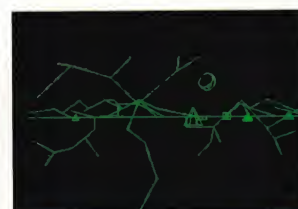
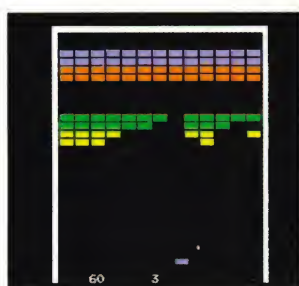
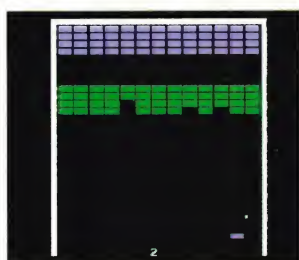
had a profound effect on me. But the weakest aspect of the compilation is actually the oldest of the games on offer: *Super BreakOut*. While Namco trace their titles back to *Galaga* for their ongoing Museum series, and the Williams pack threw in *Defender* as its elder statesman, I think the Atari pack has perhaps taken the retro trend a little too far.

Bearing in mind Atari's rich arcade heritage, surely something that still warrants the classic label but not quite as old could have been included in this collection – after all, Atari released *Space War* and *Pong* into the arcades but it doesn't mean that an arcade-perfect conversion is necessarily a good idea.

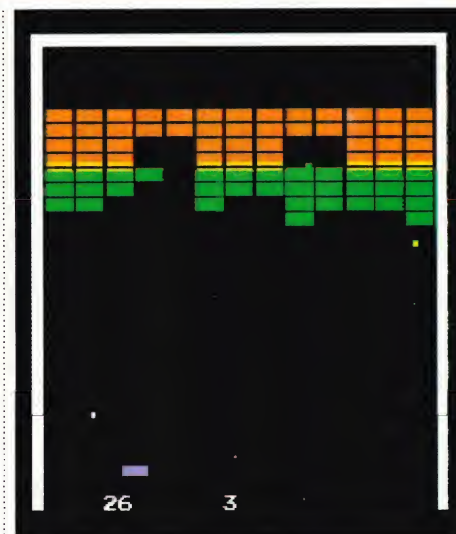
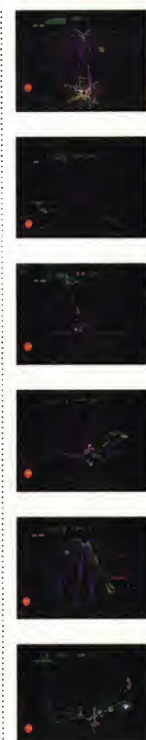
THE NEXT STEP

For me, the *Arcade Greatest Hits* are shaping up to be a very promising line, and bearing in mind the Volume 1 tag, it seems likely that much more of Atari's rich vein is left to be mined. However, although it probably seems like a great idea to bung in all

the old games that are knocking around the archive, a more selective collation would make the packs more desirable – with Atari's three Star Wars coin-ops a perfect place to begin. That said, this Atari collection does serve its purpose as a trip down memory lane rather well, but as with all of its retro ilk, the lasting appeal is extremely dubious.



Opinion: As someone whose gaming background involves at least four of these titles, I can honestly say that I enjoyed this collection of oldies more than the Namco collections or even the Williams pack. However, as is becoming a litany when reviewing these collections, the novelty of replaying *Asteroids* and *Centipede* is very short-lived, and while the FMV interviews with the men behind them add an extra layer to the Atari Collection, I really can't see myself returning to *Super BreakOut* or *Battlezone*, as both prove that the good old days are often best left as a fond memory. Infact, it's a bit like meeting up with the prettiest girl from your old school and finding she's not quite what you remember... SM



PSP RATING...
Graphics : N/A
Animation : N/A
Sound FX : N/A
Music : N/A
Lastability : N/A
Playability : N/A

75

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2xtreme



xtreme Sports was a rather bizarre addition to the

PlayStation's selection of racing games when it was released over a year ago. Offering you a choice of four modes of transport – mountain bikes, skateboards, roller blades and land luges – in a race around the world. You and a whole pack of racers could choose any of the vehicles and then proceed to kick and punch each other into oblivion while avoiding the various hazards (urban and otherwise) that got in your way. It was a great, if strange game that got a very respectable score of 90 way back in Issue 2. Now the sequel *2xtreme* has arrived and brings a few changes with it. The most noticeable difference is the removal of the luges and the addition of snowboards to the vehicles for you to risk your neck with as you take on 12 new tracks set in Japan, Africa, Las Vegas and Los Angeles. Also, you can't race with any vehicle you want any more. Now you can only cycle in Africa, snowboard in Japan, skateboard in LA and roller blade in Vegas, obviously because you wouldn't get very far with a snowboard on the streets of LA, and you would look equally foolish trying to roller blade in the snow. There are other differences which have been implemented though, so that *2xtreme* can justify having the label of a sequel.

CH-CH-CHANGES

For a start you've now got some power ups to get hold of. As you speed around the courses you will see various coloured gates, looking for all the world like oversized croquet hoops. By passing through these you will gain various things. Some will give

you points or activate obstacles or secret passages. Others though will give you power ups which will give you the edge in the race if used at the right time. These can increase your speed, jumping height, restore your health or increase your fighting ability. Fighting ability is particularly useful because you get extra points when you knock your opponents down. To boost your points even further you can also perform tricks by pressing certain button combinations once you're in the air. This is almost impossible to do

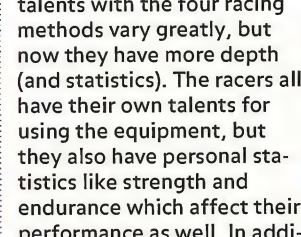
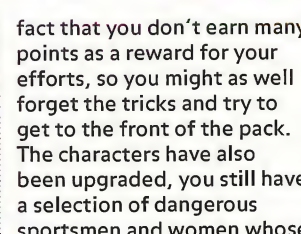
because you have to either hit a ramp at maximum speed, or get a high jump power up so that you can stay up long enough to complete the stunt without falling all over the track. The sense of achievement when you finally get it right is dulled by the

tion to those you can take any pre-generated character and change the amount of handling, acceleration and speed they can get out of the four vehicles. If you fancy even more freedom though you can create a character from scratch, giving them

their own name and characteristics and even choose their look (you can't stop them from wearing their baseball cap on backwards though). This is an intriguing new option which gives you more of a personal stake in the race itself. But it's after you've seen all these new features that you start looking for the good points of the prequel, and that's where the problems start.

ADD, DON'T SUBTRACT

The problem with *2xtreme* is that compared to the original it does add things to the game, but it also takes plenty away. You no longer race for cash in order to buy new equipment and thus upgrade your character which takes a lot of the purpose out of the game and means that once you've raced all the courses and won a season, you're unlikely



Release : OUT NOW
Company : SCEE
Price : £44.99
Players : 1-2
Genre : DRIVING

WORLD OF EXTREMES

2xtreme has 12 new courses for you to deal with in your race for glory. While they might seem easy when you're on the rookie difficulty level, once you get up to the pro and extreme levels it's a completely different ball game. The vehicles get faster and you have more obstacles to contend with as you try to negotiate familiar twists and turns at the new high speeds.



AFRICA

Jump on your mountain bike and head into the jungle along dirt tracks and through the canyons.



LOS ANGELES

Hit the freeways with your skateboard and try to avoid the traffic as you race through the city of angels.



LAS VEGAS

Take a gamble as you roller blade through the crowded streets of the city of sin, dodging the traffic.



JAPAN

Let it snow! Head down the slopes with your new snowboard and avoid becoming a human avalanche.

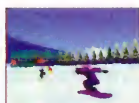
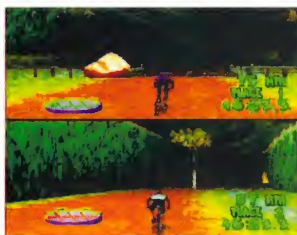
to try it all over again. The fact that you all race with the same vehicles is also a huge disappointment, it's obviously to make you have to learn to use all the vehicles rather than just sticking with the that you're best at but the problem with this idea is that all the vehicles perform pretty much the same, the manoeuvrability may differ slightly but it's almost impossible to tell, and the top speed seems to be the same for all of them. The fact that you had to choose your vehicle according to it's strengths

and weaknesses was one of the strategic elements of *Extreme Sports* which was a lot of fun. There also seems to be little difference between the vehicles, since they all have exactly the same top speed and pretty similar manoeuvrability to each other. At least in the prequel you could choose between the faster but harder to handle bikes and luges, over the more agile but slower roller blades or skateboards. By making them nearly the same in all qualities but their looks takes a

lot away from the game. The tracks are actually tamer than those of *Extreme Sports*, with hazards just being thrown at you in order to make the game a bit harder, when all it does is drive you crazy when you've approached yet another LA crossroads only to find it completely blocked by a couple of buses which you have no hope of avoiding. And while you're getting a close look at the bus you'll notice just how blocky the graphics are when you get near to them. Actually they're blocky whichever distance you are, and their overall style is a big let down. The lastability of the game also comes into question, since winning a season doesn't allow you to upgrade your character or give you any real satisfaction.

All in all, *2xtreme* is a sequel which is inferior in almost every way to the original. The graphics are poor, the fun is limited, and the game just gets downright dull after a few hours. Even the two player mode doesn't save it, offering you a split screen but not much extra

playability. If you want a fun racing game, check out *Extreme Sports*, because the prequel will offer you a lot more enjoyment than this shoddy follow-up.



Opinion *2xtreme* manages to accomplish a rather amazing achievement, it's a sequel which is actually far worse than the original game. It removes the ability to race on anything you want and restricts you to using the same equipment as everyone else. This takes most of the fun out of the game and sadly it's all downhill from there. Fans of *Extreme Sports* should hold onto their copy because they probably won't like this follow up, and those who have never played the superior prequel should check it out as it's a lot better than this.

DB

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PSP RATING...

Graphics : 65
Animation : 48
Sound FX : 51
Music : 58
Lastability : 50
Playability : 60

55

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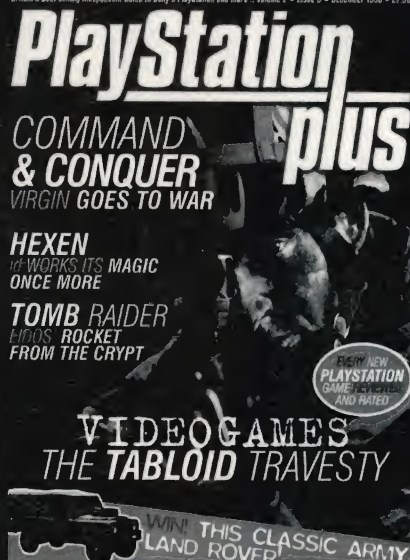
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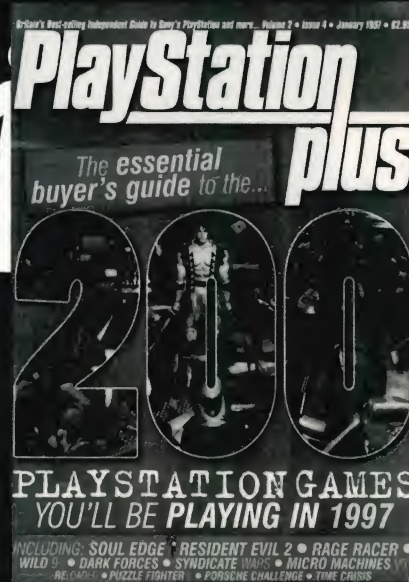


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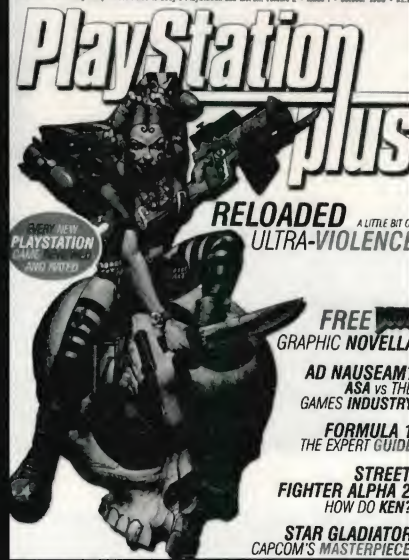


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Review Index

Since the PlayStation was launched back in September 1995 a flood of titles really has saturated the market, with games about pretty much everything from exorcising demons of Doom to virtual beat-box rapping of Parappa the Rapper. Naturally, PlayStation Plus has endeavoured to cover every single release for Sony's 32bit machine and as a result we've critically dissected in excess of 190 games! Following on from the extensive buyer's guide featured in PlayStation Plus Issue 16, we present the first installment of our comprehensive review index. Featuring every single title ever to appear in the pages of this hallowed tome, this is the ultimate buyer's guide and is designed to give the reader all the information they need about any PlayStation game, quickly and easily. So if there's a game you want to know more about, whether it's old or new, you know where to turn to...

KEY



AN EASILY RECOGNISABLE ICON THAT DETAILS THE NUMBER OF PLAYERS THAT CAN COMPETE AT THE SAME TIME.



THIS ICON INDICATES WHETHER THE TITLE USES A MEMORY CARD FOR SAVE GAMES.



DOES THE GAME HAVE A TWO-PLAYER LINK-UP OPTION? IT WILL IF THIS ICON IS TICKED.



SOME STRATEGY GAMES AND SHOOT 'EM UPS SUPPORT THE MOUSE, WHICH IS HIGHLIGHTED WITH THIS ICON.



IF A GAME IS MULTITAP COMPATIBLE IT WILL SHOW UP HERE. SOME GAMES CAN SUPPORT TWO MULTITAPS.



THE GAME SUPPORTS SPECIAL CONTROLLERS, SUCH AS THE N64CON, STEERING WHEEL AND LIGHT GUN.

NAME	PRICE	COMPANY							COMMENT	SCORE
3D LEMMINGS	£44.99	PSYGNOSIS	1	✓		✓			SMART 3D GRAPHICS BUT UNINTERESTING AND AWKWARD GAMEPLAY.	81
ACTUA GOLF	£44.99	GREMLIN	1-4	✓					CYBER GOLF AT ITS MOST REALISTIC. THE BEST GOLF GAME ON THE PLAYSTATION.	88
ACTUA SOCCER	£44.99	GREMLIN	1-2	✓					SLICK 3D GRAPHICS ARE ECLIPSED BY FLAWED GAMEPLAY. NICE, BUT DATED.	92
ADIDAS POWER SOCCER	£44.99	PSYGNOSIS	1-4	✓			✓		ANOTHER FOOTBALL GAME WHICH FAVOURS COOL GRAPHICS OVER GAMEPLAY.	93
AGILE WARRIOR	£39.99	VIRGIN	1	✓					CHALLENGING BUT NEAT ARCADE STYLE AIRCRAFT-BASED SHOOT 'EM UP	85
AIR COMBAT	£39.99	NAMCO	1-2	✓					TEDIOUS, LACKING DEPTH AND VARIETY EVEN IN THE TWO-PLAYER MODE.	80
AIV EVOLUTION GLOBAL	£44.99	SCEE	1	✓		✓			ENJOYABLE IF SOMEWHAT OVERWHELMING RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SIM.	86
ALIEN TRILOGY	£44.95	ACCLAIM	1	✓					AN EXCELLENT DOOM CLONE WHICH CAPTURES ALL THE SCARES OF THE FILMS	93
ALONE IN THE DARK	£39.99	INFOGRAMES	1	✓					INTERESTING PUZZLES FAIL TO MAKE UP FOR THE GAME'S DATED PRESENTATION.	82
ANDRETTI RACING	£44.99	EA	1-4	✓	✓				A LIGHT-WEIGHT ALTERNATIVE TO THE FANTASTIC FORMULA 1.	85
AQUANAUT'S HOLIDAY	£39.99	SCEE	1	✓					ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY UNDERWATER ADVENTURE THAT IS FRANKLY DULL.	53
AREA 51	£44.99	GT	1-2			✓		LIGHT GUN	A BLAND SHOOT 'EM UP BASED ON A BLAND ARCADE GAME.	52
ASSAULT RIGS	£44.99	PSYGNOSIS	1-2	✓	✓				A NICE IDEA WHICH IS TOO SIMPLE AND EASY FOR ITS OWN GOOD.	81
AYRTON SENNA'S KART DUEL	£44.99	PHILIPS	1-2	✓	✓				SUBSTANDARD RACING ACTION FROM PHILIPS. AVOID AT ALL COSTS.	32
BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN 2	£49.99	TAKARA	1-2	✓					VISUALLY SUPERB BUT LACKING ANY REAL MEATY SUBSTANCE.	71
BATMAN FOREVER	£44.99	ACCLAIM	1-2	✓					BEAT 'EM UP BOREDOM IN THE EXTREME. EVEN IF YOU'RE A BATFAN, BEWARE.	28
BEOLAM	£44.99	GT	1	✓		✓			A MOUSE PROVES INVALUABLE FOR THIS FRANTIC TACTICAL BLASTER.	87
BIG HURT BASEBALL	£44.99	ACCLAIM	1-2	✓					A PRETTY GOOD ADAPTATION OF A FAR FROM THRILLING SPORT.	81
BLACK DAWN	£44.99	VIRGIN	1	✓					THE EQUALLY GOOD SEQUEL TO THE EXPLOSIVE AGILE WARRIOR.	86
BLAST CHAMBER	£44.99	ACTIVISION	1-4	✓			✓		ANYONE FOR A GAME OF FUTURISTIC TAG? I THOUGHT NOT.	54
BLAM! MACHINEHEAD	£44.99	CORE DESIGN	1	✓					INITIALLY CONFUSING BUT ULTIMATELY GRIPPING 3D BLASTER.	89
BLAZING DRAGONS	£44.99	BMG	1	✓					HUMOURED IF SOMETIME LABORIOUS GRAPHIC ADVENTURE.	87
BREAK POINT	£44.99	OCEAN	1-4	✓	✓		✓		A PLEASANT ENOUGH TENNIS GAME, ALTHOUGH THE MOVES AREN'T INTUITIVE.	73
BROKEN SWORD	£44.99	SCEE	1	✓		✓			SUPERB POINT AND CLICK ADVENTURE, WITH A STRONG STORY AND ATMOSPHERE.	90
BURNING ROAD	£44.99	FUNSOFT	1-2	✓	✓				THE PLAYSTATION EQUIVALENT OF DAYTONA USA. GOOD GAMEPLAY AND LOOKS.	88
BUBBLE BOBBLE PACK	£44.95	ACCLAIM	1-2	✓					ONE OF THE BEST RETRO COLLECTIONS TO DATE, OFFERING TWO GAMES IN ONE.	84
BUST-A-MOVE 2	£29.99	ACCLAIM	1-2	✓					ONE OF THE CUTEST, MOST INCREDIBLY ADDICTIVE PUZZLE GAMES OF ALL TIME.	92
CASPER	£44.95	INTERPLAY	1	✓					AIMED AT THE YOUNGER PLAYER. NICE GRAPHICS BUT VERY AVERAGE.	62
CHEESY THE MOUSE	£44.95	OCEAN	1	✓					THE AWFUL MAIN SPRITE HIDES SOME GREAT PLATFORM ACTION.	82
CHESSMASTER 3D	£44.95	EA	1-2	✓					TOUGH CHESS SIM, BUT ONLY FOR THOSE WITH NO ONE TO PLAY.	87
COMMAND AND CONQUER	£44.99	VIRGIN	1	✓					CONQUER THE WORLD IN THIS FAST-PACED STRATEGY GAME. A CLASSIC.	91
CONTRA: LEGACY OF WAR	£44.95	KONAMI	1-2	✓				3D GLASSES	3D VERSION OF THE CLASSIC KONAMI SHOOT 'EM UP. SOLID BLASTING ACTION.	83
COOLBOARDERS	£44.99	SCEE	1	✓					YOU CAN'T PLAY TWO PLAYERS, BUT THIS IS BRILLIANT SNOWBOARDING FUN.	91
CRASH BANDICOOT	£44.99	SCEE	1	✓					FRUSTRATING IT MIGHT BE, BUT THIS IS ONE OF THE BEST PLATFORMERS AROUND.	86
CRITICOM	£44.99	IMAGINEER	1-2	✓					GREAT GRAPHICS, BUT THIS 3D BEAT 'EM UP STILL LOSES OUT TO TEKKEN.	82
CYBER SLED	£39.99	NAMCO	1-2	✓					A DULL ARCADE SHOOTING GAME WHICH SHOWS EVEN NAMCO MAKES MISTAKES.	69

NAME	PRICE	COMPANY							COMMENT	SCORE
CYBER SPEED	£39.99	MINOSCAPE	1-2	✓					A SPACE AGE RACING GAME ON WIRES. NOT A WIP-OUT BEATER.	88
CYBERIA	£39.99	INTERPLAY	1	✓					A HANDFUL OF SHOOTING AND PUZZLE GAMES WHICH DON'T IMPRESS.	60
D	£44.99	ACCLAIM	1	✓					STUNNING BUT SHORT. GREAT GRAPHICS BUT ONLY AN HOUR TO COMPLETE.	83
DARKSTALKERS	£44.99	VIRGIN	1-2	✓					STREET FIGHTER MEETS HORROR CHARACTERS MEETS AVERAGE GAMEPLAY.	78
DAVIS CUP TENNIS	£44.95	TELSTAR	1-4	✓			✓		THIS TENNIS GAME MANAGES TO BE ONE OF THE WORST PSX TITLES TO DATE.	50
DEFCON 5	£49.99	SCEE	1	✓					3D ADVENTURE INVOLVING MORE WANDERING THAN ACTION.	72
DESCENT	£44.99	INTERPLAY	1-2	✓	✓				DOOM IN SPACE SHIPS. GREAT IDEA, GREAT GAME.	90
DESTRUCTION DERBY	£49.99	PSYGNOSIS	1-2	✓	✓			NECCON/WHEEL	LENGTHY PLAY REVEALS A SHALLOW GAME, GREAT WITH TWO PLAYERS THOUGH.	89
DESTRUCTION DERBY 2	£44.95	PSYGNOSIS	1	✓	✓			NECCON/WHEEL	A HUGE IMPROVEMENT ON THE ORIGINAL, WITH FASTER CARS AND WIDER TRACKS.	89
DIE HARD TRILOGY	£44.99	FOX INTERACTIVE	1	✓		✓		GUN/WHEEL	THREE GAMES FOR THE PRICE OF ONE, AND TOP MOVIE ACTION IN ALL OF THEM.	92
DISCWORLD	£39.99	SCEE	1	✓		✓			COMEDY ADVENTURE WITH SOME OF THE MOST ANNOYING PUZZLES EVER.	71
DOOM	£44.99	GT	1-2		✓				THE ORIGINAL 3D MAZE SHOOT 'EM UP. STILL OZZES WITH PLAYABILITY.	92
EARTHWORM JIM 2	£44.95	VIRGIN	1	✓					CONVERSION OF A SNES CLASSIC THAT MANAGES TO BE A LESSER COPY.	79
ESPN EXTREME GAMES	£39.99	SCEE	1-2	✓					ODDBALL SPORTS RACING GAME WITH A TOUCH OF VIOLENCE. BRILLIANT FUN.	90
EXTREME PINBALL	£44.95	EA	1-2	✓					A POOR PINBALL TITLE, WITH UNREALISTIC BALL MOVEMENT.	44
FADE TO BLACK	£44.99	EA	1-2	✓					ABSORBING 3D SEQUEL TO FLASHBACK. PLENTY TO SEE, DO AND SHOOT.	91
FIFA '96	£44.99	EA	1-4	✓			✓		FOOTIE GAME WITH LITTLE CONTROL OVER PLAYERS AND BAD CAMERA VIEWS.	92
FIFA '97	£44.99	EA	1-4	✓			✓		NOT MUCH IMPROVEMENT OVER '96 SINCE IT PLAYS SO VERY SLOWLY.	64
FINAL DOOM	£44.99	GT	1-2		✓	✓			THIRTY NEW DOOM LEVELS TO EXPLORE, BUT STILL THE SAME GAME.	89
FIRESTORM: THUNDERHAWK 2	£44.99	CORE DESIGN	1	✓					THE 3D GRAPHICS AREN'T PERFECT BUT THIS IS STILL A GREAT HELICOPTER GAME.	86
FIRE AND KLAUD	£44.95	BMG	1-2						INTERESTING BUDDY COP GAME, LET DOWN BY HAVING NO SAVE GAME OPTION.	82
FLOATING RUNNER	£44.99	XING	1	✓					PLAYABLE 3D PLATFORMER WITH STRANGE VIEWPOINT AND CONTROLS.	81
FORMULA 1	£44.99	PSYGNOSIS	1-2	✓	✓			NECCON/WHEEL	THE ULTIMATE SIMULATION DRIVING GAME.	93
GALAXIAN 3	£49.99	NAMCO	1-4	✓		✓	✓	NECCON	GRAPHICALLY IMPRESSIVE SHOOT 'EM UP, BUT LACKING IN PLAYER INTERACTION.	36
GEX	£44.99	BMG	1	✓					A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF A DULL PLATFORMER.	68
GOAL STORM	£39.99	KONAMI	1-2	✓					LARGE SPRITES IN THIS FOOTBALL GAME, WHICH MOVE FAR TOO SLOWLY.	66
GRID RUN	£44.95	VIRGIN	1-4	✓	✓		✓		'TAG' GAME WHICH IS ONLY FUN IN MULTIPLAYER MODE.	64
GUNSHIP	£44.99	MICROPROSE	1	✓					COMPLEX AND PLAYABLE HELICOPTER SIM, BUT NOT THAT REALISTIC.	83
HARDCORE 4X4	£44.99	GREMLIN	1	✓				WHEEL	DULL ALL-TERRAIN RACING GAME WITH TOO FEW TRACKS.	83
HEBERKE POPOITTO	£39.99	SUNSOFT	1-2	✓					TWO PLAYER PUZZLE GAME. FUN, BUT BUST-A-MOVE 2 IS BETTER.	42
HENXEN	£44.95	GT	1-2	✓					THE GRAPHICS MAY BE SLOW AND BLOCKY, BUT THIS DOOM CLONE HAS DEPTH.	84
HI-OCTANE	£44.99	BULLFROG	1-2	✓					A TEDIOUS RACING GAME WHICH LACKS SUBSTANCE.	76
IMPACT RACING	£44.95	JVC	1-2	✓	✓				UNUSUAL RACING GAME WHICH MIXES DESTRUCTION DERBY WITH MAD MAX.	82
IN THE HUNT	£39.99	THQ	1-2	✓					2D SUBMARINE SHOOT 'EM UP WITH PLENTY OF THINGS TO FIRE AT.	79
INTERNATIONAL TRACK & FIELD	£44.99	KONAMI	1-4	✓			✓		AN ADDICTIVE SPORTS SIM WHICH EXCELS IN ITS MULTI-PLAYER MODE.	93
ISS DELUXE	£44.95	KONAMI	1-2	✓					STRAIGHT CONVERSION OF THE CLASSIC SNES FOOTIE GAME.	66
IRON AND BLOOD	£44.95	ACCLAIM	1-2	✓					AVERAGE 3D BEAT 'EM UP WITH A FANTASY THEME.	67
IRON MAN	£44.99	ACCLAIM	1-2	✓					SHODDY DRIVEL. A BAD GAME AND A WASTE OF A GREAT COMICS LICENSE.	22
JET RIDER	£44.99	SCEE	1-2	✓					INNOVATIVE RACER WHICH IS LET DOWN BY POOR GRAPHICS AND GAMEPLAY.	63
JOHNNY BAZOOKATONE	£39.99	US GOLD	1	✓					ROCK 'N' ROLL PLATFORMER WITH POOR GAMEPLAY.	60
JUMPING FLASH	£39.99	SCEE	1	✓					SUPERB 3D PLATFORMER WHICH SADLY HAS TOO FEW LEVELS.	89
JUMPING FLASH 2	£44.99	SCEE	1	✓					PERFECT SEQUEL TO JUMPING FLASH, BUT STILL NOT ENOUGH LEVELS.	88
KRAZY IVAN	£39.99	SCEE	1-2	✓	✓				A CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF GRAPHICS OVER PLAYABILITY IN THIS ROBOT GAME.	73
LEGACY OF KAIN	£44.99	BMG	1	✓					VAMPIRE ACTION/ADVENTURE GAME OFFERING A HUGE ENJOYABLE CHALLENGE.	92
LOADED	£39.99	GREMLIN	1-2	✓			✓		ACTION PACKED BLASTER BUT LACKING IN VARIETY.	75
LOMAX IN LEMMINGLAND	£44.95	PSYGNOSIS	1	✓					LEMMINGS INSPIRED PLATFORMER WHICH FAILS TO IMPRESS.	70
LOVE SOLDIER	£39.99	TELSTAR	1	✓					COMMANDO IN 3D BUT SADLY IT'S ALL TOO SLOW.	72

"I HAVEN'T SHUT
MY EYES
SINCE FRIDAY."



NAME	PRICE	COMPANY							COMMENT	SCORE
LOST VIKINGS 2	£44.99	INTERPLAY	1-2	✓					AVERAGE ARCADE GAME WHICH OFFERS LITTLE ORIGINALITY.	63
MADDEN NFL '97	£44.99	EA	1-2	✓					SOLID AMERICAN FOOTBALL SIMULATION WITH GREAT DEPTH.	86
MAGIC CARPET	£44.99	BULLFROG	1	✓					FAST 3D SORCERY SHOOT 'EM UP WITH MANY LEVELS TO EXPLORE.	90
MICKEY'S WILD ADVENTURE	£39.99	SCEE	1	✓					AVERAGE PLATFORM GAME WHICH FAILS TO SET THE PULSE RACING.	66
MONSTER TRUCKS	£44.95	PSYGNOSIS	1	✓					A GOOD IDEA HAS BADLY IMPLEMENTED IN THIS OFF-ROAD RACER.	82
MORTAL KOMBAT 3	£49.99	SCEE	1-2	✓					MK FANS WILL LOVE THIS, BUT STREET FIGHTER STILL RULES THE 2D SCENE.	90
MORTAL KOMBAT TRILOGY	£44.95	GT	1-8	✓					VIRTUALLY EVERY MK CHARACTER IS HERE, SO HARD-CORE FANS WILL BE HAPPY.	90
MOTOR TOON GRAND PRIX 2	£44.95	SCEE	1-2	✓	✓				COMIC RACING GAME WHICH BEATS THE ORIGINAL IN EVERY DEPARTMENT.	85
MYST	£44.95	SCEE	1	✓		✓			POINT AND CLICK ADVENTURE WITH STATIC SCREENS. NOT VERY EXCITING.	76
NAMCO MUSEUM VOLUME 1	£39.99	NAMCO	1-2	✓					COMPILATION OF NAMCO'S ARCADE HITS, INCLUDING PACMAN.	84
NAMCO MUSEUM VOLUME 2	£39.99	NAMCO	1-2	✓					NOT AS STRONG AS THE FIRST COLLECTION, UNLESS YOU LOVE XEVIOUS.	63
NAMCO MUSEUM VOLUME 3	£39.99	NAMCO	1-2	✓					BETTER THAN VOLUME 2 BUT STILL MORE POOR GAMES THAN CLASSICS.	71
NASCAR RACING	£44.95	SIERRA	1	✓					POOR DAYS OF THUNDER-STYLE RIP OFF.	35
NBA IN THE ZONE	£44.99	KONAMI	1-2	✓					ROUGHER LOOKING THAN TOTAL NBA, BUT THIS HAS MORE PACE AND AGILITY.	85
NBA IN THE ZONE 2	£44.95	KONAMI	1-2	✓					THE IMPROVED GRAPHICS MAKE THIS SEQUEL A GREAT IMPROVEMENT.	90
NBA JAM EXTREME	£44.95	ACCLAIM	1-4	✓			✓		BASKETBALL GAME WITH VARIOUS OUTRAGEOUS COMIC FEATURES.	80
NBA JAM TOURNAMENT EDITION	£39.99	ACCLAIM	1-4	✓			✓		CONVERSION OF THE COIN-OP WITH 2D CHARACTERS GOING TWO-ON-TWO.	86
NBA LIVE '96	£44.99	EA	1-2	✓					EA'S BASKETBALL GAME USES THE FIFA '96 GRAPHICS ENGINE AND IT SHOWS.	81
NBA LIVE '97	£44.95	EA	1-8	✓			✓		INSTINCTIVE MOVES AND PASSES MAKE FOR A SUPERB MULTIPLAYER GAME.	90
NEED FOR SPEED	£44.99	EA	1-2	✓	✓				SECOND-RATE RIDGE RACER WITH NOT MUCH SPEED AT ALL.	70
NFL GAMEDAY	£44.99	SCEE	1-2	✓					AVERAGE IN EVERY DEPARTMENT, THIS IS BEATEN BY MADDEN IN ALL RESPECTS.	82
NFL QUARTERBACK CLUB	£39.99	ACCLAIM	1-8	✓					BLOCKY GRAPHICS HIDE A COMPETENT SPORTS SIM.	75
NHL '97	£44.99	ACCLAIM	1-2	✓					POLYGON-BASED SPRITES MAKE THIS A GOOD LOOKING ICE HOCKEY SIM.	91
NHL FACE OFF	£44.99	SCEE	1-2	✓					GREAT PLAYABILITY MAKES FOR A FRANTIC GAME OF ICE HOCKEY IN THIS SIM.	85
NOVA STORM	£39.99	SCEE	1	✓					DIRE SHOOT 'EM UP WHICH SHOULD BE LEFT WELL ALONE.	55
OFF WORLD INTERCEPTOR	£39.99	BMG	1-2	✓					4X4S BOUNCE ACROSS THE MOON IN THIS DULL SPACE RACING GAME.	68
OLYMPIC GAMES	£44.95	US GOLD	1-4	✓			✓		A POOR COMPETITOR TO INTERNATIONAL TRACK AND FIELD.	70
OLYMPIC SOCCER	£44.95	US GOLD	1-4	✓			✓		STILL ONE OF THE MOST PLAYABLE FOOTBALL GAMES ON THE PLAYSTATION.	93
ONLINE	£44.99	TELSTAR	1-2	✓					THE MOST INCREDIBLY BLAND FOOTBALL GAME TO DATE.	65
PANDEMONIUM!	£44.95	BMG	1	✓					SHAMES OTHER PLATFORMERS WITH ITS GRAPHICS AND INSTINCTIVE GAMEPLAY.	91
PANZER GENERAL	£44.99	MINOSCAPE	1-2	✓		✓			FULL-BLOWN STRATEGY GAME WHICH PLAYERS WILL FIND HARD WORK.	59
PGA TOUR '96	£44.99	EA	1-8	✓					A DODGY PUTTING SYSTEM LETS DOWN THIS GOLF SIM.	69
PGA TOUR '97	£44.95	EA	1-8	✓					GREAT LOOKING GOLF GAME, BUT STILL SUFFERS DUE TO ITS CONTROL SYSTEM.	65
PERFECT WEAPON	£44.95	EA	1	✓					A POOR MAN'S BEAT 'EM UP/ADVENTURE WHICH EXCELS IN NEITHER GENRE.	51
PITBALL	£44.95	WARNER	1-4	✓			✓		SPEEDBALL TYPE GAME WITH RUN OF THE MILL LOOKS AND PLAYABILITY.	73
PLAYER MANAGER	£44.95	ANCO	1	✓					PREDICTABLE RESULTS ABOUND IN THIS FOOTBALL MANAGEMENT GAME.	68
PRIMAL RAGE	£44.99	WARNER	1-2	✓					2D BEAT 'EM UP WHICH IS FAR TOO AWKWARD TO PLAY.	77
PRO PINBALL: THE WEB	£44.95	EMPIRE	1	✓					ONLY ONE PINBALL TABLE, BUT WHAT A TABLE. HANDLES LIKE THE REAL THING.	93
PROJECT OVERKILL	£44.95	KONAMI	1	✓					HI-TECH VERSION OF THE OLD BEZERK COIN-OP WITH LOTS OF BLOOD.	79
PSYCHIC DETECTIVE	£44.99	EA	1	✓					SURPRISINGLY PLAYABLE FMV INTERACTIVE MOVIE.	84
PD '90	£44.99	WARNER	1	✓					DOOM CLONE WHICH SHOWS PROMISE BUT NEVER DELIVERS.	76
POWERPLAY HOCKEY '96	£44.95	VIRGIN	1-4	✓			✓		A SOLID AND FAST PACED ICE HOCKEY SIM.	85
RAGING SKIES	£44.99	SCEE	1-2	✓					VERY AVERAGE FLIGHT GAME WHICH LACKS PLAYABILITY.	73
RAIDEN PROJECT	£39.99	DCEAN	1	✓					ENJOYABLE BUT LIMITED CONVERSION OF AN OLD COIN-OP.	72
RAYMAN	£34.99	UBI SOFT	1	✓					REPETITIVE PLATFORM GAME.	59
RELOADED	£44.95	GREMLIN	1-2	✓					MARGINALLY BETTER THAN THE ORIGINAL, WHICH WASN'T THAT GOOD.	73
RESIDENT EVIL	£49.99	VIRGIN	1	✓					THIS HORROR ADVENTURE WHICH IS ONE OF THE MOST PERFECT GAMES EVER.	94
RETURN FIRE	£44.95	WARNER	1-2	✓					AN EXCELLENT CREATION. POPTASTIC!	91
REVOLUTION X	£39.99	ACCLAIM	1-2	✓					ANOTHER EXCELLENT CREATION!	48
RIDGE RACER	£39.99	NAMCO	1	✓				NEGCON/WHEEL	EXCELLENT RACING GAME, SADLY LACKING IN NUMBER OF TRACKS.	88
RIDGEC RACER REVOLUTION	£49.99	NAMCO	1-2	✓	✓			NEGCON/WHEEL	AN IMPROVEMENT ON THE ORIGINAL, NOW WITH A TWO-PLAYER LINK UP MODE.	87
RISE 2 RESURRECTION	£44.99	ACCLAIM	1-2	✓					A MEDIOCRE BEAT 'EM UP.	78
RIOT	£44.95	PSYGNOSIS	1-16	✓			✓		SPEEDBALL-TYPE GAME WHICH OFFERS LITTLE.	67
ROAD RASH	£44.99	EA	1-2	✓					STRAIGHTFORWARD FIGHTING AND RACING GAME.	64
ROBOTON - X	£44.95	GT	1-2	✓					SIMPLE MINDED FUN IN THIS UPDATE OF AN ARCADE CLASSIC.	66
SAMPRAS EXTREME TENNIS	£44.95	CODEMASTERS	1-4	✓			✓		EASE OF PLAY MAKES THIS TENNIS GAME A JOY TO BEHOLD.	89
SHELLSHOCK	£44.99	CORE DESIGN	1	✓					DULL AND REPETITIVE TANK GAME.	75
SHOCKWAVE	£39.99	EA	1	✓					EMPTY SHOOT 'EM WILL TINY SPRITES AGAINST BLAND BACKGROUNDS.	56
SIM CITY 2000	£44.99	MAXIS	1	✓			✓		RUN YOUR OWN CITY IN THIS ENGROSSING CONVERSION OF A PC CLASSIC.	91
SKELETON WARRIORS	£44.95	VIRGIN	1	✓					THIS LOOKS LIKE A 16BIT GAME, AND PLAYS EVEN WORSE.	69
SLAM 'N' JAM '96	£44.95	BMG	1-2	✓					UNPLAYABLE BASKETBALL GAME.	64
SMASH COURT TENNIS	£44.95	NAMCO	1-4	✓			✓		SLOW AND UNRESPONSIVE CONVERSION OF THE 16BIT CLASSIC.	57

NAME	PRICE	COMPANY							COMMENT	SCORE
SOVIET STRIKE	£44.99	EA	1	✓					3D CHOPPER SHOOT 'EM UP WITH GREAT GRAPHICS AND GAMEPLAY.	92
SPACE HULK	£44.95	EA	1	✓					NOT THE FASTEST GAME AROUND, BUT THIS IS A GOOD ACTION/STRATEGY MIX.	84
SPACE JAM	£44.95	ACCLAIM	1-2	✓					UNINSPIRING MOVIE CASH-IN BASKETBALL GAME.	65
SPOT GOES TO HOLLYWOOD	£34.95	VIRGIN	1	✓					TOO LITTLE TOO LATE FOR THIS PASSABLE PLATFORMER. GREAT MUSIC THOUGH.	77
STAR GLADIATOR	£44.95	VIRGIN/CAPCOM	1-2	✓					CAPCOM'S FIRST 3D BEAT 'EM UP, AND IT'S NOT HALF BAD.	91
STARFIGHTER 3000	£44.95	TELSTAR	1	✓					NICE ENOUGH TO LOOK AT BUT ULTIMATELY A DULL SHOOT 'EM UP.	80
STARWINDER	£44.95	MINDSCAPE	1	✓					SIMPLISTIC RACING GAME WHERE EVERY LEVEL PLAYS THE SAME.	59
STEEL HARBINGER	£44.95	MINDSCAPE	1	✓					UNSPECTACULAR GRAPHICS AROUND IN THIS OCCASIONALLY FUN SHOOT 'EM UP.	79
STREET FIGHTER ALPHA	£44.99	VIRGIN	1-2	✓					UPDATE OF THE STREET FIGHTER SERIES WHICH INCLUDES NEW SUPER MOVES.	91
STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 2	£44.95	VIRGIN	1-2	✓					CUSTOM COMBOS AND COUNTER MOVES BEAT IT'S PREDECESSOR HANDS DOWN.	92
STREET FIGHTER THE MOVIE	£39.99	ACCLAIM	1-2	✓					A COMPLETE INSULT TO THE STREET FIGHTER NAME.	67
STREET RACER	£44.95	UBISOFT	1-8	✓			✓		A FAIR RACING GAME WITH PLENTY TO DO BUT NOT MUCH EXCITEMENT.	79
STRIKEPOINT THE HEX MISSIONS	£44.95	ELITE	1-2	✓					POOR HELICOPTER GAME. GO FOR SOVIET STRIKE INSTEAD.	60
STRIKER '96	£39.99	WARNER	1-4	✓			✓		ONE OF THE MORE SIMPLISTIC FOOTBALL GAMES.	69
SUIKOEN	£44.99	KONAMI	1	✓					SOLID RPG THAT ISN'T GOING SET THE WORLD ALIGHT BUT STILL WORTH A LOOK.	81
SUPERSONIC RACERS	£44.95	MINDSCAPE	1-2	✓					THIS MICRO MACHINES-STYLE RACER DOESN'T HAVE ENOUGH PACE TO ENTHRALL.	74
TEKKEN	£39.99	NAMCO	1-2	✓					NAMCO'S FIRST 3D BEAT 'EM UP. SUPERB, BUT OVERSHADOWED BY ITS SEQUEL.	93 ✓
TEKKEN 2	£49.99	NAMCO	1-2	✓					IMPROVES ON THE ORIGINAL IMMEASURABLY. ONE OF THE BEST FIGHTING GAMES.	95 ✓
TEMPEST X3	£34.99	INTERPLAY	1-2	✓					AN UPDATE OF A GREAT RETRO SHOOTER.	80
TEN PIN ALLEY	£44.95	EA	1-6	✓					THIS COULD HAVE BEEN GOOD FUN, BUT IT ENDS UP BEING A NOVELTY TITLE.	54
THEME PARK	£44.99	BULLFROG	1	✓					ONE OF THE GENTLER 'SIM' GAMES AVAILABLE.	85
TIME COMMANDO	£44.99	EA	1	✓					UNUSUAL BUT FUN TIME-TRAVEL FIGHTING GAME.	81
TOTAL NO.1	£44.99	SCEE	1-2	✓					A FAIR BEAT 'EM UP GREATLY IMPROVED BY THE ADDITION OF A QUEST MODE.	91
TOMB RAIDER	£44.95	CORE DESIGN	1	✓					FEMALE INDIANA JONES ANTICS ON THE PSX. ONE OF THE BEST GAMES EVER.	92 ✓
TOP GUN: FIRE AT WILL	£44.95	MICROPROSE	1	✓					REPETITIVE MOVIE SPIN-OFF FLIGHT SIM.	66
TOTAL NBA '96	£44.99	SCEE	1-8	✓			✓		SUPERB BASKETBALL GAME WITH INCREDIBLE ATTENTION TO DETAIL.	83
TRUE PINBALL	£39.99	OCEAN	1	✓					FOUR TABLES IT MIGHT HAVE, BUT IT STILL LOSES OUT TO THE WEB'S ONE.	92
TUNNEL B1	£44.99	OCEAN	1	✓					WIPEDOUT CROSSES WITH DOOM IN THIS HIGH-SPEED SHOOT 'EM UP.	89
TWISTED METAL	£39.99	SCEE	1-2	✓					DESTROY THE SUBURBS IN THIS MAD MAX-STYLE CAR BATTLE.	82
TWISTED METAL 2	£44.95	SCEE	1-2	✓					AN EXCELLENT SEQUEL WHICH IS GRANDER IN SCALE AND THRILLS.	88
VICTORY BOXING	£44.95	JVC	1-2	✓					DEEPER THAN MOST FIGHTING GAMES, THIS TAKES SOME GETTING INTO.	74
VIRTUAL GOLF	£44.95	CORE DESIGN	1-4	✓					A POOR COUSIN TO ACTUA GOLF.	57
VIRTUAL POOL	£44.99	INTERPLAY	1-2	✓					A GREAT POOL GAME THAT OFFERS A REALISTIC SIMULATION.	85
WARHAMMER	£44.99	MINDSCAPE	1	✓					THIS ABSORBING WARGAME HAS DEPTH, IF NOT LOOKS.	86
WARHAWK	£39.99	SCEE	1	✓					INSTANTLY PLAYABLE FLYING GAME WITH GREAT WEAPONS.	82
WILLIAMS ARCADE CLASSICS	£29.99	GT	1-2	✓					RETRO COMPILATION WITH FIVE GOOD GAMES OUT OF SIX, INCLUDING DEFENDER.	89
WING COMMANDER III	£44.99	EA	1	✓					SUPERB MOVIE SEQUENCES MIXES WITH POOR GAMEPLAY IN THIS SPACE OPERA.	80
WIPEDOUT	£49.99	PSYGNOSIS	1-2	✓	✓			NEGCON	ULTRA-FAST STYLISH RACING GAME. A MUST FOR SPEED FREAKS EVERYWHERE.	91
WIPEDOUT 2097	£44.95	PSYGNOSIS	1-2	✓	✓			NEGCON/WHEEL	BETTER IN EVERY RESPECT, THIS IMPROVES THE GRAPHICS AND IS EVEN FASTER.	94
WORLD CUP GOLF	£39.99	US GOLD	1-8	✓					COMPETENT GOLF GAME WITH GREAT GRAPHICS.	80
WORMS	£39.99	OCEAN	1-4	✓					MULTI-PLAYER JOY WILL BE YOURS IN THIS FABULOUS BATTLE GAME.	92
WWF IN YOUR HOUSE	£44.95	ACCLAIM	1-4	✓			✓		BELOW AVERAGE WRESTLING GAME WHICH OFFERS LITTLE AND PROVIDES LESS.	48
WWF WRESTLEMANIA	£39.99	ACCLAIM	1-4	✓			✓		ENTERTAINING FIGHTING GAME WITH DEADLY SPECIAL MOVES.	83
X2	£44.95	TEAM 17/OCEAN	1-2	✓					TEDIOUS SHOOT 'EM UP WHICH IS FAR TOO DIFFICULT.	58
X-COM: ENEMY UNKNOWN	£44.99	MICROPROSE	1	✓			✓		STRATEGY GAMING AT IT'S VERY BEST AS YOU TAKE ON ALIEN INVADERS.	88
X-COM: TERROR FROM THE DEEP	£44.99	MICROPROSE	1	✓			✓		X-COM UNDERWATER, EVERYTHING ELSE IS THE SAME.	82
ZERO DIVIDE	£??	OCEAN	1-2	✓					A SOUND ENOUGH FIGHTING GAME WHICH DOESN'T AMAZE.	72

"WHEN WAS FRIDAY?"



PlayStation
STARPLAYER
9/10

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SCI-FI COMEDY AT ITS BEST AS THE CREAM OF RED DWARF IS COBBLED

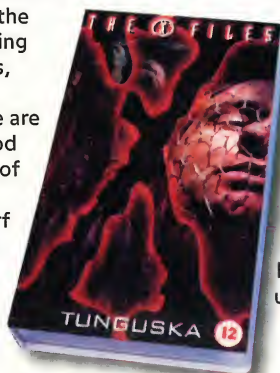
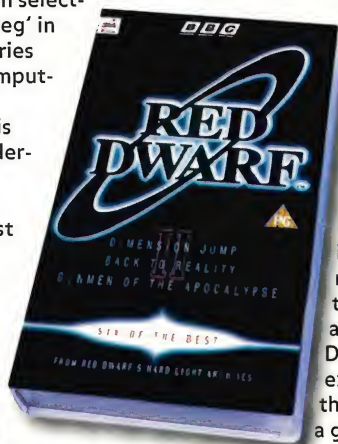
TOGETHER, WHILE MULDER AND SCULLY STILL TRY TO MAKE SENSE OF THE ON-GOING ALIEN SIGHTINGS IN THE X-FILES RELEASES. IN KEEPING WITH THE ALIEN TREND, MARS ATTACKS LIMPS IN AS A WEAK NOVEL, AND BLUR GO BACK TO BASICS WITH THEIR FIFTH ALBUM. A LITTLE SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE...

VIDEOS

RED DWARF: SIX OF THE BEST

PRICE: £29.99
RELEASED BY: BBC VIDEO
RATING: ★★★

With Red Dwarf VII proving to be considerably less funny than past series, the Beeb's video division have bundled together what the series' creators believe to be the greatest moments from each of the preceding series. One episode from each of the six series has been selected, from 'Queeg' in the second series (the ship's computer, Holly, is replaced by his tyrannical underling) to 'Dimension Jump' (the first – and best – Ace Rimmer adventure. While the episodes are all fairly strong, the release of the compilation is made rather redundant by BBC Video having already released cassettes of the first six series already! Granted, to make the pack seem more alluring, a CD is provided with the Red Dwarf creators, Doug Naylor and Rob Grant, offering insights into why the chosen episodes are their favourites, and how the series got off the ground. The episodes all show just how much weaker Red Dwarf VII is since its budget was inflated to provide a glossier look (didn't the BBC learn with Doctor Who?), and if you don't own the existing tapes, then these are a good slice of Red Dwarf at its best. SM



THE X-FILES: TUNGUSKA

PRICE: £13.99
RELEASED BY: Fox Video
RATING: ★★★

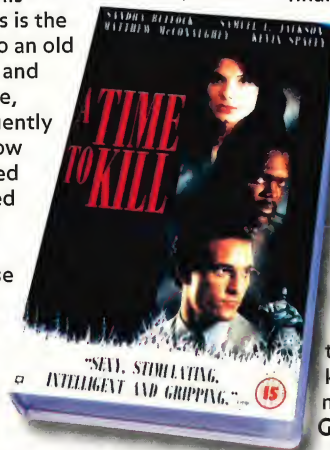
After the disjointed mess of File 6: Master Plan, The X-Files once again returns to familiar territory with Tunguska, the follow up to the recently broadcast Piper Maru. During a terrorist bomb raid Mulder and Scully stumble upon rogue FBI agent Alex Krycek who, with a little physical persuasion, blabs the details of a conspiratorial cover-up involving a secret package. The package is in fact a diplomatic pouch containing a meteor fragment which, it is later revealed, contains alien antimatter. During the examination of the ancient rock a government scientist is

infected with the 'black cancer', whereupon Scully and Mulder are drafted in to investigate its origin. The plot twists and turns, and eventually thickens when Mulder is eventually lead to the remote Russian forest near Tunguska with Krycek in tow, when Mulder finds out the shocking truth behind the alien substance and, during the second of the two episodes, the real identity of Alex Krycek. Like Master Plan, Tunguska is not a stand alone video – to understand the plot and the characters within you really do need to have seen Piper Maru from series three. Unfortunately the episode is only available through mail order using slip contained in Tunguska packaging. A con? Not really, but a huge disappoint if you haven't previous seen Piper Maru and have to wait to fully understand Tunguska. AS

THE FAST SHOW 2

PRICE: £12.99
RELEASED BY: BBC Video
RATING: ★★★★★

Arguably the greatest sketch series on TV, Paul Whitehouse and co. have rewritten the rule book as far as comedy series go. After the compiled highlights cassette of the first series, BBC Video have seen sense and released the second series in its entirety over two tapes, with all the old favourites so much better than before. The second series saw the addition of TV hardman Monkfish in a number of roles, Rowley Birkin (who was always 'very, very drunk'), while the relationship between Ted and Ralph got stronger and stronger. Also returning are Chris the thieving Cockney (who's still a 'bit ooh, a bit wheee'), and Jesse and his diets, but thankfully The excesses of Channel 9 have been trimmed, making for a faster paced and funnier set of tapes. None of the characters stand out as particularly weak, and Paul Whitehouse is undeniably the star proving his versatility and vocal range in virtually every sketch. Watching The Fast Show makes you realise that Harry Enfield and his sketch shows is the equivalent to an old Morecombe and Wise episode, and consequently Enfield's show looks dragged out compared to the short but sweet skits on these two tapes. Classic TV, and well overdue for a video release. SM



A TIME TO KILL

PRICE: RENTAL
RELEASED BY: WARNER
RATING: ★★★★★

The John Grisham film machine rolls on, and *A Time to Kill* ranks as the best of those produced to date. Samuel L. Jackson is Carl Lee, the Father of a young girl who is assaulted and who also took the law into his own hands to exact revenge. Lee looks set to be sentenced to Death Row, but the case against him is an emotive one with the Civil Rights Movement condemning Lee's actions. Lawyer Jack Brigrance (Matthew McConaughey) and student lawyer Ellen Roake (Sandra Bullock) take up Lee's case, and as their investigation begins it transpires that the case isn't quite as clear cut as the Civil Rights brigade would like to imply, with the racial angle played to the hilt by extremist groups. Although at 145 minutes, there is a lot of *Time to Kill*, the story is gripping and every one of the three stars are convincing in their roles. Samuel L. Jackson in particular deserves special praise, and Sandra Bullock finally sheds the air

head reputation that she gained in films such as *Speed* and *The Net*. Harder than the relatively frothy *The Firm*, *A Time to Kill* is perfect video fodder, and is the ideal way to kill a Saturday night. GR

BOOKS SACRED MONSTERS

PRICE: £6.99
RELEASED BY: TITAN BOOKS
RATING: ★★

Doug Bradley is the man behind the Pinhead mask in Clive Barker's *Hellraiser* films. As the films now reach their fourth (and weakest) instal-



ment, Bradley takes the opportunity to go behind the scenes of monsterland and talk to some of the most famous movie

monsters, and also explore the origins of the mask as a device of fear. Well, while the book does indeed take a deep look at the work that goes into the creation of such horror legends as Freddy Krueger, Leatherface, and Bradley's Pinhead alter-ego, there isn't enough info to warrant a book, and the information available has been recounted by Bradley himself in countless genre magazines and is thus already available to the horror stalwarts this book is presumably aimed at. The interviews with Gunnar Hansen and details on the history of genre make-up are interesting because of Bradley's genuine enthusiasm for the theme, but ultimately *Sacred Monsters* is a over-extended magazine feature padded out by a bit of historical bumph, with the occasional glimmer of promise shining through every now and then – rather like Pinhead's puzzle box. SM

THE ART OF STAR WARS THE ART OF THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK THE ART OF RETURN OF THE JEDI

(Revised Editions)

PRICE: £17.99
RELEASED BY: TITAN BOOKS
RATING: ★★★★★

Updated to cover George Lucas' new updates, Titan's trilogy of books are superb companions to the *Star Wars* films. Each book is a lavish mixture of pictures, design sketches, and photographs detailing every aspect of the films. The script and changes

made during and after filming make interesting reading, and their coverage of each of the three films is made even more extensive through detailed descriptions of the marketing and merchandise released with the films. The attention to detail of each book is incredible, and the films are broken down scene by scene with never seen before pictures of the matte paintings used in the

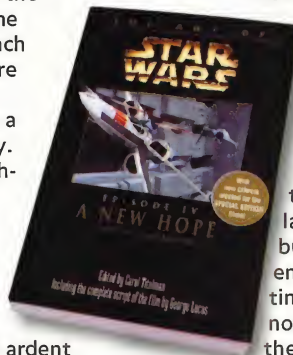
films, and costume designs – with each and every creature seen in the films named and given a background story. At just under eighteen quid, the 'Art of' books aren't exactly cheap, but they provide such a good overview of the series that ardent fans will consider them a must. The books were originally released a year or two ago, and the nods to the new editions of the films are a handful of pages inserted into the last section of the books. With 'A New Hope' the first to be re-released, obviously there is more visual material regarding the new scenes on show, but there isn't a great deal new in 'Empire' if the book is anything to go by, while 'Jedi' is surprisingly detailed in what is going to be added, although again picture material is limited. These are incredible books, and make every other 'Making Of' volume look scant by comparison. An essential addition to any *Star Wars* fans' shelves. SM

ALIENS: STRONGHOLD

PRICE: £10.99
RELEASED BY: TITAN BOOKS
RATING: ★★★

If you haven't been keeping up to date with Titan's Aliens book range, than some of the developments in Stronghold will leave you scratching your head. Since the series' early books, the Aliens have taken the Earth, been wiped out, had the Queen's royal jelly processed as a powerful narcotic, and witnessed the development of a suit resistant to the creatures' acid blood. Stronghold now throws an android Alien into the story-telling pot, but the Titan trend of

adding a mad scientist who thinks he can cash in on his knowledge of the Aliens is ever present. Stronghold begins with a husband and wife team delivering goods to a Dr Nordling. Nordling is conducting tests on Alien Chestbursters, but as ever this is just the tip of the iceberg, and the good guys find themselves thrown in to the test bay and duly fleeing as the Aliens



inevitably break loose and wreak their own justice. The artwork is considerably better than that of later releases, but the mad scientist plot is getting a bit thin now. That said, the alien attacks are well handled

and the robotic Alien not the cliché it could have been, but even so perhaps its time Titan took the Aliens down a different route – a less technically-able society, perhaps? GR

MARS ATTACKS!

PRICE: £5.99
RELEASED BY: SIGNET
RATING: ★

With the UK gripped by *Mars Attacks* fever, and Tim Burton's film now doing the rounds at the cinema, Signet are quick off the mark with a novelisation of the plot by the film's script writer,

Jonathan Gems. Gems has put together a no-frills recount of the stunning-looking film, but it has to be said that the writing style used in the book is more suited to an infant than the 12 rating the film implies. Gems' writing style is incredibly primitive, with an overuse of exclamation marks, and sentences rarely stretching past ten words! It tends to read like a Janet and John book, with vari-



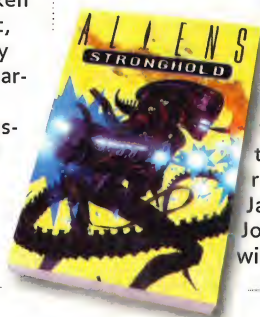
ants such as 'see the Martian melt the soldier' and 'watch the larger robots rip up a trailer park.' It must also be said that the actual plot is a tad weak, and the fact that Gems has barely sketched out the characters adds no extra depth to the scenario – although every chapter opens like a Travelogue publication with an irritating history of each location. *Mars Attacks!* is an entertaining film which is made even more impressive by Tim Burton's weird sense of humour and the celebrity killathon it contains. The novelisation, on the other hand, is a one-dimensional retelling but with none of the style. Very weak, and an over-priced cash-in. SM

MUSIC CDS BLUR: BLUR

PRICE: £9.99
RELEASED BY: FOOD
RATING: ★★★★★

Blur's fifth studio album is a radical departure from the oompah-pah horns and cheesy show time extravagance of *The Great Escape*, the stereotypical caricatures of Errol D'Sa and Tracy Jacks replaced by a harder lo-fi edge, with Damon Albarn trading in his Britpop crown to become king of the English slackers. 'Beetlebum' leads the eponymous *Blur*, an excellent single but an unfair representation of what else is

included on the album. 'Song 2', and 'Chinese bombs' for that matter, are raw punk thrash-outs in which guitarist Graham Coxon vents his angst, while the charming and emotive 'Strange news from another star' is this album's equivalent of 'The Universal'. 'Theme from Retro' is Blur's token Hammond organ anthem, but the weirdest track of all is 'Essex Dogs' in which Albarn delivers his monotone drawl over Coxon's grating guitar. True, this track and indeed the album isn't what the teeny-bops have been expecting, but is instead the sound of four people experimenting, and feeling completely at ease, with their music. Brilliant. AS



Plus Points

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FARRINGDON LANE, LONDON, EC1R 3AU
SMERRETT-IMAGES@MAIL.U-NET.COM

LIMITED DESTRUCTION

I have just purchased *Destruction Derby 2* for the PlayStation at £44.99. Finally after much hype and many delays, coupled with brilliant magazine reviews I was able to load the game up. I selected my first course, following the manual instructions to the letter, I played a great game crashing and bumping my way round the course causing mayhem and destruction. Finally my car blew up. 'Wow!' I thought, 'I can't wait to see the action replay', so I sat there waiting with baited breath. The manual states: "View Replays; select this view and the game will replay your last race from several Preset camera angles" Most of the magazine reviews all praised the Replay function, one of them even stated that you should smash round the course "looking for great photo opportunities... ramps are best" Indeed the screen shots looked breath taking, flying cars etc. I then remembered the rolling demo I had seen showing all the madness and the mayhem.

Imagine my horror when the replay started and all I saw was just a rerun of the race from behind my car, I thought I had been doing something wrong. So I reread the instructions and all the magazine reviews, and no, I had been doing everything correctly. I then watched a TV review of the said game, once again, the Replay function received raving reviews.

Naturally, I believed the software to be faulty, so I took it back to the shop to exchange it. They checked it and it was technically OK, the Replay didn't work though. I demanded another copy, which was also checked. So what the hell is going on? We have been duped. The main reason I bought this game was for the Replay function and I'm now stuck with the game as it isn't faulty. This all reminded me of *Formula 1*, probably the most bugged game in PlayStation history. I am now £90 shy with two games not living up to their promises. But anyway, I have



written a stiff letter to Psygnosis" trying to get some answers but I don't hold out much joy, as long as the poor punter shells out the cash, what do they care. I was wondering if your merry band can find out anything about this.

Adam Trotman, Warwickshire

The preview and review copies of Destruction Derby 2 we received did in fact contain the said replay modes, so when the final, packaged code arrived and it was conspicuous by its absence, no-one was more surprised than us. It seems that in between the review copy we saw (which was nearly two months before the game's release, following the title's postponement to January), a problem with the replay arose and the replay facility was duly dropped. As of yet, there is no official line from Psygnosis regarding the removal of the replays, but, in order for both sides of the story to be aired, we aim to print their reasons next month.

THE RELIABILITY DEBATE CONTINUES

I write in response to a letter from Mr Paul Lambert in Lancashire. I sympathise deeply with Mr Lambert as I have experienced similar problems with my PlayStation. I bought my first PlayStation at the beginning of September 1996 and for the first six weeks I had no problems at all, but then they started.

I turned on my machine as usual and inserted my new *Tekken 2* game. To my horror

the 'in game' music

jumped and skipped all over the place and even the rendered FMV sequences paused and jerked like mad. I initially thought my problem lay with the *Tekken* CD, but after trying my other games and finding the same, my worst nightmare was realised; my Sony PlayStation was at fault.

I called Sony and after a lot of explaining they arranged for a courier to bring me a replacement. This machine lasted three weeks and then I was back to my original problem. More telephoning and yet another replacement was sent across to me. Then three weeks later, behold, the same problem! This time I noticed that after the PlayStation had been on for about an hour it began to play games perfectly, I also noticed that the sound skipping only occurred when playing games, music CDs played perfectly!

So it was time for replacement No. 3, I have now had this machine for a month and I'm praying that I don't get any more trouble. Deja-Vu anyone?

Jason Wedgeburrow, Worcs.

After reading the letter from Paul Lambert of Lancashire I feel I must write and say this: I bought my son a PlayStation in October 1995, he has now had it replaced three times. I rang Sony and they said that the were not aware of any problems with the PlayStation, but I feel that it

is the worst console I have ever bought. They last approximately six months – if you're lucky. They seem to all develop the fault of skipping and jumping and it's time that Sony replaced all faulty machine with something that works.

I have stopped my son from buying any games because it's a waste of time and money, I was even thinking of contacting the consumer programme to see if they could sort anything out as there must be a lot of people with fault machines who do not buy magazines to find out what's going on.

Sony has seen a lot of us down the garden path, all you can call PlayStation is a heap of junk! They have a design fault and everyone who finds this should have a replacement and the fault corrected once and for all. I certainly would not recommend anyone to buy one after my experience.

Mrs A Allonky, Cumbria

I wonder if you can help put my mind at rest. Having recently become the proud owner of a PlayStation, I decided to spend some time in W.H. Smith and find a worthy magazine to buy which would give me plenty of advice on what games were worth buying etc. After spending a considerable amount of time I decided on PlayStation Plus! I chose this magazine because you don't beat around the bush, if you think it's crap, you say so.

I spoke to a friend recently who told me of somebody that they know who bought a PlayStation when they first came out and that they had a lot of problems with it and that the machine had been returned on numerous occasions. I thought that this was probably a one off, but after reading your February issue I see that Paul Lambert has also had a lot of problems also. Having spent a lot of time deciding whether to buy a Saturn or a PlayStation I find it quite alarming that the console I have just spent the best part of £200 on some-

**DESTRUCTION
DERBY 2 AND
DATE ARE THE
TWO MAIN
TARGETS FOR
READER COM-
PLAINTS THIS
MONTH...**



FAQ

THE MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS OF THE MONTH ARE, ONCE AGAIN, MET WITH STRAIGHT ANSWERS.

Q Following your encouraging review of the Konami Hyperblaster light gun, I have been searching everywhere for one. However, nobody seems to stock them, and has no idea where I can get one. Please help, and tell me where I can find one.

A The Konami Hyperblaster is currently only available through importers, as the release of the UK version was slightly delayed following our review. Konami UK are set to release the gun into shops in April, however, and can be reached on 01895 853000 for more details.

Q When *Alien Trilogy* was released, you ran a news story regarding the sequel and stated it would appear some time in 1997. Since then, though, nothing more has been reported. Are Acclaim still planning the sequel, or has it been scrapped?

A When *Alien Trilogy* was at the end of its development period, there were a number of ideas the Probe and Acclaim New York teams wanted to cram in, but couldn't due to time and memory constrictions. These included a death match mode, a handful of new levels and a couple of mission ideas that the team devised as the game development progressed. The team also created a new sprite-handling system which would have eradicated the pixelation the first game suffered from. Sadly, these plans have now fallen by the wayside as the teams have been split on to new projects, and EA's new deal with Fox Interactive means that any further *Alien*-based games will be released through them - including the forthcoming *Alien Vs Predator* and *Alien: Resurrection* titles.

Q In past issues your magazine has stated how expensive it is to produce a game for the PlayStation. If this is the case, why are so many games scrapped (Eraser, for example) or delayed beyond belief. Surely, if a game becomes more and more delayed, it costs even more for the software house? What is the usual reasoning behind scrapping a title or delaying it?

A Software houses are always loathe to scrap a project, but at the end of the day it could cost them more money to release it and watch it bomb, than to nip it in the bud. Every now and then, though, a product they have every confidence in may slip to unforeseen circumstances, and they then walk a very fine line between gambling on it being worth the wait (and the extra development money) or waiting a bit, and then killing it off. *Waterworld*, *Spot Goes to Hollywood* and *Rock'n'Roll Racing 2* are three of the most delayed games for the PlayStation, but one of the worst delays experienced is Virgin's PC epic, *Heart of Darkness* (which is also PlayStation-bound). *Darkness* has been in development for nearly four years now, but Virgin are so sure of its quality that they refuse to give up on it - it's unlikely they will ever recoup its costs, but they feel the quality of the title will be so ground-breaking it will raise Virgin's profile as an innovative software house.

Q I am a proud new PlayStation owner, and am desperate to get hold of a football game for my PlayStation. I used to enjoy *International Superstar Soccer Deluxe* for my old Super NES, but reviews of the Sony version look a bit disappointing. What alternatives are there on offer?

A So far, the PlayStation has probably played host to more Soccer games than any other, and not a month goes by without the current favourite being usurped by another, even better kickaround. The current favourite, however, is *ISS Pro* from Konami, and there's nothing on the horizon that comes anywhere close.

thing that may give me a lot of problems in the future.

As nobody is denying the fact that there have been a few teething troubles with the early PlayStations, could you tell me if these have been rectified on the later models. Is there anything I can do besides not use my PlayStation to prevent these things from happening?

At the moment I only have a couple of demo-discs and two games, though it won't take long to build up a collection. *Actua Golf* I find is a very good game, although it has caused a few minor arguments in my house, as my wife keeps beating me! *Formula 1* however has got me totally hooked, its a great game.

Despite your article in the January issue regarding the bugs, the only minor irritation I have found is that the picture tends to slow down in certain places and situations on certain tracks, but this certainly doesn't spoil the gameplay for me.

Steve Atkins, Gloucester

Next month, we will be giving Sony an open forum to address the skipping CD problems. It's a problem that refuses to go away, and as such needs more space than we can offer here. So stay tuned for the full Sony statement...

PICK A CARD...

I'm very concerned about a statement that was made in Issue 5, volume 2, where you stated that "the Datel Memory Card has a tendency to crash the machine". I have had this problem, so does this mean that some 120 slot cards are faulty?

In my case, the card nearly always crashes the machine and finally formatted itself resulting in me wasting all my time completing *Tomb Raider*, *Ridge Racer*, *Ridge Racer Revolution*, *Tekken*, *Tekken 2*, *Alien Trilogy* and many more.

I bought the said item for £39.99 from Virgin and saw at the same time a disk drive for the same purpose, which also appeals to me as being a wise purchase. I would like to swap items and pay the difference which will cost me a further £40.00 but now I can have a backup copy.

The main thing that really

bugs me though is my valuable time wasted, as I work two jobs, seven days a week, over 62 hours.

So do I sit for another couple of hours and try all over again? So please Datel, advise me on this major problem, or *PlayStation Plus* - help me!
Jim M.

PICK A CARD 2...

I thought I would bore you with the fun and games that I've been having with a Datel Memory Plus card, you know the one, saves 120 blocks for your PlayStation but try finding them!

The first card kept games for about five days before requesting to be formatted. Try completing *X-Com* in five days. So I returned it to Datel who didn't seem to think it was much of a problem, it took six weeks to get a reply, which was a new card.

So, back to *X-Com*. Only thing, this new card seemed to lose pages for a period and then to find them again weeks later. I carried on. At Christmas I got *X-Com: Terror from the Deep*! But after three weeks the three saves of the current game were all lost and the card would only allow access to page 4. No matter, I started again. After five days it lost the new game, but found the previous three saves! Are you following all this, because I had difficulty! So I carried on with the original game. Then it lost them all again. But then it started again, although this time it told me that the only page it could find was full! The sense of satisfaction at hurling that card at a stone

wall was wonderful. It may sound childish, but it's the only £30 Datel will ever get from me! In conclusion, the Sony Card, with only 15 blocks of memory may sound expensive but it seems to do the one thing that the Datel card fails to do; it actually works!!
Malcolm Fairman, Kent

We tried on several occasions to get a reply from Datel regarding your, and indeed our, problems. But as of yet have yet to receive a reply. The ball's in your court, Datel.



(LEFT) THE RELIABILITY OF THE DATEL 120 SLOT MEMORY CARD SEEMS TO BE A SOURCE OF CONSTERNATION FOR SEVERAL READERS.

Next Month

MDK

SHINY ENTERTAINMENT FIRST CAME TO PROMINENCE WITH THE RELEASE OF EARTHWORM JIM FOR THE 16BIT SYSTEMS. FOLLOWING A RECENT DEAL WITH INTERPLAY, THE CALIFORNIA BASED DEVELOPERS ARE SET TO RELEASE THEIR FIRST PLAYSTATION TITLE, A CONVERSION OF MDK. ALREADY A HUGE HIT ON THE PC, CAN SHINY WEAVE THEIR MAGIC ON THE SONY SYSTEM?



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Rebel Assault 2

WITH STAR WARS FEVER SET TO HIT FEVER PITCH AS THE NEWLY UPDATED FILMS HIT THE SILVER SCREEN AGAIN, VIRGIN AND LUCASARTS ARE QUICK OFF THE MARK WITH REBEL ASSAULT 2. USING FMV TO RECREATE THE BATTLE BETWEEN THE REBELS AND THE EVIL EMPIRE, REBEL 2 OFFERS THE PLAYER TO CONTROL THE MILLENNIUM FALCON, BATTLE STORMTROOPERS AND INFILTRATE THE EMPIRES BASE.



Moto Racer

DELPHINE'S FIRST PLAYSTATION GAME SINCE FADE TO BLACK, MOTO RACER IS SAID TO BE ONE OF THE GREATEST RACING GAMES SET TO HIT THE SONY MACHINE. WITH RAGE RACER ON THE CARDS, THIS IS NO SMALL CLAIM, YET IT HAS TO BE SAID THAT DIRT BIKE RIDING HAS NEVER LOOKED SO GOOD. JOIN US AS WE SPEAK TO DELPHINE ABOUT THEIR LATEST PROJECT, AND RIDE INTO THE SUNSET ON THEIR RENDERED MEAN MACHINE.



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